

TOPER'S END

by

G. D. H. and MARGARET COLE

REFERENCE



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CONTENTS

I. THE OVERTURE

The Letters :

	PAGE
Mary Philip to her friend Bella Lindman	9
Professor Johann Meyerbeer to his friend Charles Morley	12
George Potts to Dr. Percival Sambourne	15
Dr. P. Sambourne to George Potts	15
George Potts to Dr. P. Sambourne	16
Dr. P. Sambourne to George Potts	17
Mrs. Moggridge to Dr. P. Sambourne	17
David Oman to Mrs. Moggridge	19
Mrs. Moggridge to Dr. P. Sambourne	19
Mary Philip to Mrs. Moggridge	20
Charles Morley to Dr. P. Sambourne	20
Dr. Amadeus Franck to Dr. P. Sambourne	21

II. CURTAIN-RAISER

Fresh Arrivals at Excalibur House	22
Bedroom Scene	32
Fracas in the Dining-room	39
Incursion at Dinner	45

III. FIRST ACT

Dr. Franck Encounters the Home Guard	51
Dr. Glück to the Rescue	67
Colonel Welsh's Narrow Squeak	72

IV. SECOND ACT

1. Dead Body
2. In the Hall
3. According to Potts
4. According to Orian
5. The Chief Constable at Home
6. Queenie Moggridge Explains
7. Featuring Gurth Moggridge. Dr. Aronson
8. Featuring the Meyersbeers. Dr. Professor de Winters. Dr. Potts
9. Featuring Patricia Moggridge. Mr. Mrs. Mudge. Mudge

V. ENTR'ACTE

1. From Inspector Newton's Notebook
2. Mary Philip's Version

VI. THIRD ACT

1. Colonel Welsh Takes Stock
2. Enter Superintendent Wilson
3. "And So Does Mudge"
4. Wilson Gives It a Day
5. Clean-up
6. Jumping to Conclusions
7. Dr. Sambourne's Discovery
8. $X = ?$
9. Up the Garden Path

VII. FINALE

1. Superintendent Wilson Starts Again
2. Superintendent Wilson Returns to Lem

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

DR. PERCY SAMBOURNE

MRS. QUEENIE MOGGRIDGE, his sister

ROWLAND MOGGRIDGE, her husband

PATRICIA and GURTH MOGGRIDGE, their children

GEORGE POTTS, Dr. Sambourne's brother-in-law

DAVID OMAN, Dr. Sambourne's research assistant

MARY PHILIP, Dr. Sambourne's secretary

MR. and MRS. MUDGE, Servants at Excalibur Ho

DR. EVA GLÜCK, Viennese psychologist

DR. AMADEUS FRANCK, from Vienna

PROFESSOR JOHANN MEYERBEER, from Berlin

FRAU BERTHA MEYERBEER, his wife

DR. KURT ARONSON, Biblical scholar from Vienna

PROFESSOR DE WAUTERS, Professor of Fine Ar
Amsterdam

COLONEL HUBERT WELSH, Chief Constable of Bri

MRS. EMILY WELSH, his wife

SUPERINTENDENT PIGOU, Superintendent of Poli
Middlebury

INSPECTOR NEWTE of Brigshire Police

DETECTIVE-SERGEANT KEYNES of Brigshire Police

SERGEANT WESTINGHOUSE of Brigshire Police

POLICE CONSTABLE SUMMERS of Brigshire Police

DR. YORICK, Dr. Sambourne's medical attendant

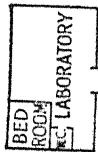
DR. DRAGON, Police Surgeon

COLONEL KENNEL of the Home Guard

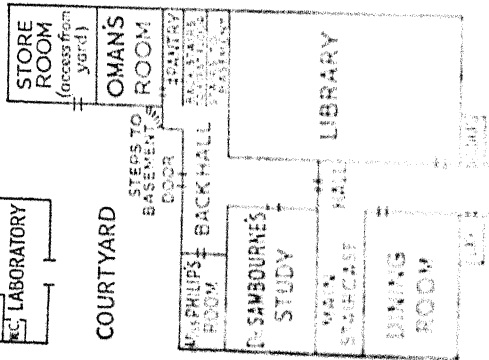
ROBERT IVENS of the Home Guard

SUPERINTENDENT HENRY WILSON of Scotland Yard

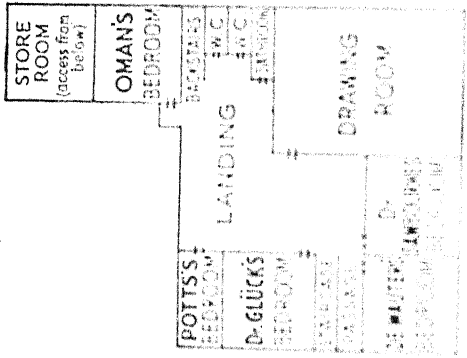
DR. MICHAEL PRENDERGAST, his friend



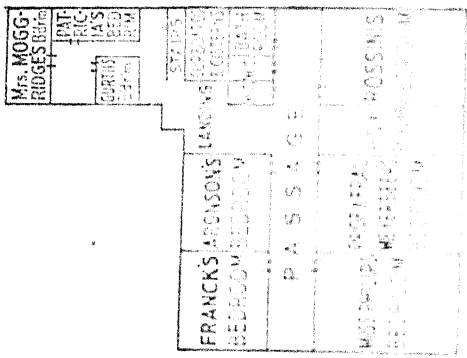
COURTYARD



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

PLAN OF
EVALUATION

I. THE OVERTURE

Letter I.

MARY PHILIP TO HER FRIEND, BELLA LINDMAN

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.

October 7th.

BELLA DARLING,—Note the above posh heading to notepaper.

I've got a new job. Phyllis Monkhouse—you know she's become a monitor or a monitress or whatever they call it—told me it was going, and when her letter came I was just feeling I couldn't endure Patters for a minute longer, so I just upped and walked out. P. can't do anything worse than sue me, I thought, and if I know him he won't do that.

It's much better pay than the pittance old P. gave me ; but it's quite crazy. Phyllis warned me I'd get straws in my hair if I took it on, and believe me I have. It's personal secretary to Dr. Sambourne, for a start. You'll remember, if you're not too great now to remember being girls together, one evening at the Club when we were told we were going to have a lecture on a New Spirit in the World or some such title, and it turned out to be an extraordinary man talking and talking for hours about the currency—and only Tommy Bolas seemed to understand a word, and he said it was raving nonsense. Well, that's Dr. Sambourne, that was. And he's my new boss, and he believes it *all*. Every word of it. He dictates reams and reams about it, not at sensible times, but just when he happens to have a bright idea. This morning, for example, he started off at 8 a.m. with an enormous piece about the early Christians all being in the hands of the bankers, and how St. Paul was really a moneylender and running a big business in Antioch, so that when he went missionarying what he was really doing was visiting the local branch managers! Ananias and Sapphira and the mediæval Popes got into it somehow, I know, but I wasn't attending very carefully because I was wondering whether there would be any breakfast left when he'd done or whether the refugees would have eaten it all. (I'll tell you all about them, in a moment.)

Actually, I do think Dr. S. is crackers, and not only about

the currency. He's a nice old thing in some ways, but he's full of the maddest ideas, and he's got a wicked paddy when something puts him out. Yesterday, he actually hit David Oman with the poker because one of his scientific experiments had gone wrong.

Mr. David Oman—who *I* think is a thoroughly nasty bit of goods—is Dr. S.'s research assistant. You wouldn't think it, but Dr. S. used to be a professor of chemistry somewhere or other. He retired after a row—I don't know what it was, but I dare say he chucked a lab. boy through the window; and having plenty of money, it seems, he settled down in this great place and built himself a lab. to his own self. And Mr. David Oman's his assistant. According to *him*, Dr. S.'s science is all a fraud and his experiments as rubbishy as his talk about finance. "Why do you stop on so long, then?" said she, all inquiring, "if it's all rubbish?" And he shrugged his shoulders and said a man must live, and besides there were compensations—and then he oged me. Detestable little squirt. Actually, he *is* horrid; he pays me compliments, which I can't stand; he says the nastiest things about Dr. S. behind his back, and he's positively *bestly* to the poor refugees.

They are, I must say, a pretty odd collection. As I told you, this house is enormous, and Dr. S. has filled it up with foreigners of every sort and kind—how he gets hold of them I can't think. And do they get on well together? I ask you! I believe refugees generally quarrel with one another—poor things, it must be pretty ghastly for them, when one comes to think of it—but I'm sure ours quarrel more than most. Not that I blame them, altogether.

You see, when Dr. S. decided to run a kind of hostel, he didn't add to his staff. He had an old couple called Mudge—yes, that's right, Mudge—who'd been here for donkey's years, and he said the refugees were to do their own chores. Which might be all right if the refugees had any sense—which they haven't—or the Mudges were ordinary servants, which they aren't. They are both horribly bad-tempered, behave as if the place belonged to them, and are plain rude to any one, except Dr. Sambourne, who tries to give them orders or interfere with them at all. As to Dr. S., either he doesn't notice how dirty and disagreeable they are, or he doesn't mind, I don't know which. They treat the wretched foreigners *abominably*. Of course, I can understand that their being there must make more work, even if the Mudges don't do it; but besides that they're the kind that hates all foreigners

naturally. Mudge goes round muttering *Spies* and *Fifth Column* under his breath ; and Mrs. Mudge won't have them in her kitchen and then grumbles that she has to do all the cooking—which seems unreasonable to me. Twice she's gone on strike in a huff, and I had to cook the dinner ! Don't laugh too hard, nobody was poisoned. But if it happens again I shall pluck up my courage and tell Dr. S. I didn't come here as cook. I haven't said anything so far because the pay's good, and I'm really rather enjoying myself. At least, I'm seeing life, of a sort.

But, my goodness, how *greedy* some people can be ! Dr. Aronson and Dr. Glück—that's two of the refugees, a he and a she—simply eat up everything in sight. That means frightful rows every lunch-time, because at lunch we have to forage for ourselves. Mrs. Mudge (who can cook quite well when she likes) provides breakfast and dinner ; but for lunch there's just food put out, and, my girl, when they get at it, you'd think we were all in the Zoo. And then, as Mrs. Mudge has put the kitchen out of bounds, washing-up's got to be done in the bathrooms, which are as inconvenient as you could possibly imagine, and all the wastes get blocked up and somebody puts mustard on Dr. Glück's underclothes which she's just washed, and so on. You can guess for yourself.

There's nothing I can do ; I've come to the conclusion. I did try to intervene once or twice, but the only result was that Oman and the Mudges joined hands to abuse me, which wasn't funny. Dr. S., as I told you, won't do anything ; actually, I don't suppose he knows much of what goes on, because when he isn't in his study he spends most of his time in his lab. in the garden. He even sleeps there most nights, and hardly comes to the main block of the house except at meal-times. I've never been into the lab. ; nobody's supposed to be allowed in except Oman, and once a week Mudge to clean. But Dr. S., whose memory's gaga like the rest of him, generally forgets to lock it up, and then when he finds it unlocked curses Oman, who says it's Mudge's fault. Then there's an appalling shemozzle, and at the end of it all Dr. S. apologises and says he probably left it unlocked himself.

When this happens I try to keep out of the way and not hear what's going on. I have a small room next Dr. S.'s study, looking out towards the lab., and have to sit there waiting in case he should want to dictate and come rushing out of the lab. shouting at the top of his voice and curse me if I don't come rushing to meet him—at all hours, as I told you.

Sometimes I've really nothing to do for days on end—but then it's really worse, because Oman comes messing round, or the foreigners come one after the other and tell me how really important they were in their own countries and how nobody loves them here—poor things. They aren't so bad, really—but such Bores! Wait till you've had the Frau Professor Meyerbeer talking to you for an hour. . . .

I meant to give you a nice pen-picture of our Zoo; some of them really are funny, but I haven't time now. I'll inflict them on you next time. Write to me, soon, if you've a moment. I don't want to go bats myself, in this batty place, so I must keep contact with the Real World—that's you and Philip. How is he? (No Romances here!)

Love,

MARY.

P.S.—You don't think I ought to chuck this and try for war-work, do you? I should be no earthly good, and it is rather fun here. I might even write a book about them!

P.P.S.—Do write soon, please.

Letter II.

FROM PROFESSOR JOHANN MEYERBEER TO HIS
FRIEND, CHARLES MORLEY

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.

October 14th.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,—I again write to express to you my gratitude for your successful efforts to procure my release from the Isle of Man, and to offer to you and to your good wife the most cordial sentiments of myself and Frau Meyerbeer. We are both in good health, and most thankful to you that you have discovered for me some place in which I can pursue my researches. Here I am indeed well situated, compared with many of my less fortunate colleagues. Myself and Frau Meyerbeer enjoy a comfortable room upon the second floor, and we are convinced that Dr. Sambourne has the intention to be very kind. He is so good as to place his library at my disposal, wherein are many works, though alas few in the German language or which make valuable contributions to the subject upon which I study. Our benevolent host may be perhaps an admirable savant, within his own specialism, of

which I do not profess to judge. In my own field of economics, I am shocked to see to what nonsense he gives a home upon his shelving. It is so also with his conversation ; for he speaks not of his scientific work, which would command the respect of my ignorance, but without end upon the currency of which he fails to comprehend even the rudiments as expounded by the great classical writers. To me, having made a lifelong study of the principles of national economy, it is a great pain to be compelled to listen while Dr. Sambourne expounds the fallacies the most childish and exposed, and not to feel free to contradict. For indeed our host loves not to be told the truth, as I have discovered the first days I am here. I am not wanting in *savoir-faire*, my dear Professor, and I suffer in silence, saving when he positively requests my opinion, upon which unpleasantnesses are disposed to follow.

Nor am I fortunate in the fellow-guests to whom, exiles as myself and Frau Meyerbeer, Dr. Sambourne extends his so admirable hospitality. It would be difficult to gather together under one roof a more worthless and annoyance-making assembly. I am a patient man, and judge my fellows as should a philosopher ; but I find my philosophic calmness exposed to the hard trials. There is in especial a so-called psychologist from Vienna, a Dr. Eva Glück, who puts me about greatly. It is she who is foremost in encouraging Dr. S. to utter his absurdities, and who meets them with equal absurdities of her own. Dr. Glück is, I regret to say, a screech-owl and a chatterer, and her laugh, I confess, causes me an irritation which I cannot entirely suppress. She annoys me also by reading my private correspondence, and by questioning Frau Meyerbeer persistently about our marital relations. Compared with her, the others are harmless ; for her compatriot from Vienna, a Dr. Aronson, is but too foolish in his encyclopaedic claims to knowledge to provoke my resentment, and, for the rest, Dr. Rossini and Dr. de Wauters I permit to chatter without the trouble of listening to what they would say. Of English, there are only two, in addition to Dr. Sambourne--a Mr. Oman, who assists him in his researches and appears to resent our presence in the establishment, and a young lady, a Miss Philip, but newly arrived among us, who mercifully says but little, and is very kind.

The house, I regret also to say, is ill conducted ; and the servants, of whom there are but two, are of a boorish disposition and unclean in habit. It is expected of us, who are Dr. Sambourne's guests, that we assist in the service, and keep

neat our own apartments. This is supposed to be arranged between us ; but it is not well ordered. Dr. Glick assumes to herself the right to superintend these affairs ; but, as she does nothing herself, and the others are of untidy manners and avoid their responsibilities, all things fall upon the unfortunate Frau Meyerbeer, who, in addition to ministering to my wants, is compelled to become like unto a household domestic. I beseech Mr. Oman, who is Dr. Sambourne's chief deputy, to request him to procure more help about the house ; but he will do nothing, saying that the country is at war, and that we should be grateful for what we receive. He is an unfriendly man, who would, I am sure, willingly see all our backsides.

All this, my dear professor, makes it difficult to pursue my researches without interruption ; for, as you know, I and Frau Meyerbeer have been accustomed to a well ordered establishment. But I am not a grumbler, as you English say, and I do my best to concentrate the mind in spite of all the difficulties. Books especially I am in need of, as the library here is filled with worthless volumes. I shall be greatly obliged if you will lend me some of those upon the enclosed list, or tell me how I can procure them without delay. I have inquired of Dr. Sambourne, who said only that none of them was worth reading, and recommended to me works of the most ignorant sophistry upon financial questions. He is an ignoramus who does not hesitate to speak presumptuously about the greatest intelligences.

I grieve to consume so much of your time expounding upon my difficulties. But you, a kindred spirit, will understand my feelings and know that I subtract nothing from my gratitude to you to procuring me and Frau Meyerbeer the means of resuming my studies. I shall have the pleasure to write to you presently concerning these when I am more settled in mind. In the meantime, please to remember me and Frau Meyerbeer very kindly to your excellent lady, and to salute for me the little maiden of whose flaxen curls I retain so enchanting a memory.

Accept, my dear Professor, my most earnest and grateful salutations.

JOHANN MEYERBEER.

Letter III.

FROM GEORGE POTTS, O.B.E., MANAGING DIRECTOR
OF SAMBOURNE, SWALLOW & CO., ELECTRICAL
ENGINEERS, TO DR. PERCIVAL SAMBOURNE.

MERCURY WORKS,
SPILLYPOOL,
NEAR BIRMINGHAM.

November 27th.

DEAR PERCY,—The overdraft I wrote to you about is indispensable. The Government insists on our extending the works for important war contracts (for the Aircraft Production people), and the bank is quite ready to advance the money. We shall need £200,000; and, unless we get it, the Government will take over the works and put the B.E.C. people in to run it. You won't like that any better than I shall. I know your views about bankers and overdrafts; and hitherto I have always managed to respect your opinions. But war alters things; and you know as well as I do that we've got to lick the Germans or go right under. So just put your prejudices in your pocket for once, and give me full authority to go ahead. There's no alternative, really; and I know I can make a first-class thing out of the new works, both now and when the war's over. It's just the chance to get a tip-top modern equipment I've been wanting for years. It's urgent, too. Wire your agreement, and I'll go full steam ahead.

Amelia sends her love, and hopes you are well and not finding your houseful of jackdaws too much bother.

Yours ever,

GEORGE POTTS.

Letter IV.

FROM DR. PERCIVAL SAMBOURNE TO GEORGE
POTTS, O.B.E.

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
'NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.

November 28th.

DEAR GEORGE,—I don't agree. Bank overdrafts are the very devil. Once we let ourselves get into the power of these vampires, they will suck our blood to the last drop. I'll let you have £20,000 out of my own pocket, if it's any use; but I won't agree to an overdraft on any terms. If the Government

wants you to extend the works, let them find the money without handing us over tied and bound to the bloodsuckers. If they won't, carry on as you are. If you're serious in what you say about their giving over the place to the B.E.C., by God we'll fight them. But I don't believe it. It's all a trick to get us into the bankers' power. They caused this war—they and the German bankers between them. I'm as patriotic as the next man; but hand myself over to be crucified by a gang of financiers, I will not. Tell them to go to hell; and let me know if you want that £20,000.

Love to Amelia and the children. I'm surer than ever that I'm on to a big thing in the laboratory. It's all done now—bar the final touches. Tell you all about it when we meet. Don't fuss.

Yours,

P. SAMBOURNE.

Letter V.

FROM GEORGE POTTS TO DR. P. SAMBOURNE.

MERCURY WORKS,
SPILLYPOOL,
NEAR BIRMINGHAM.

November 29th.

DEAR PERCY,—You're impossible. But I know it's no good arguing with you by letter. I propose to run over for the night next Saturday—can't get away any sooner—and talk things over. We've got to get on with the job: it's all first priority stuff, and may make just the difference. I've no love for bankers; but there's a war on, and if the Government wants the thing done that way, we've got to toe the line. I suppose you can fit me in, despite your circus. I'm rather looking forward to having another look at them, by the way; and I do badly want to hear how your experiments have been getting on. It's grand if you've actually pulled it off. Heartiest congratulations. Amelia and the kids are O.K., I believe; but I've hardly seen them for weeks. Up to the eyes. See you Saturday.

GEORGE.

P.S.—I am really delighted to hear the experiments have gone so well. You shall tell me all about the thing when we meet

Letter VI.

FROM DR. PERCIVAL SAMBOURNE TO GEORGE
POTTS.

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.

November 30th.

DEAR GEORGE,—Come if you want to. I'm always pleased to see you. And I do want to tell you about my new thing, which is really A1. But if you think you're going to persuade me to put my neck in a noose, you're mistaken. We shall never win the war till we've beaten the bankers. A sound monetary system is what really matters. Love to Amelia.

Yours,

P. S.

Letter VII.

FROM MRS. MOGGRIDGE TO DR. PERCIVAL
SAMBOURNE.

POSHER'S HOTEL,
CUSHVILLE-ON-SEA,
DEVONSHIRE.

November 30th.

DEAR PERCY,—You haven't written to me for an age, but I often think about you and wonder how you are getting on. I do think brothers and sisters ought to see one another *quite often*, in these dreadful days. We haven't had any bombs here yet—not really near; but I lie awake at night and think I hear them overhead time after time. I am so *thankful* Gurth is not of military age, because I don't know what I should do if he were taken away.

This hotel is quite comfortable, and the food good, but very full of quite dreadful people. I simply cannot imagine how they can afford to come here; but everything is so upset these days. Of course, most of them are *Joes*; and I expect they are all doing very well out of the war and not paying any taxes, which are positively pauperising me. Poor Gurth has a dreadful cold he caught from one of them, who was sniffling all over the place. He is getting better now; but I feel sure he needs a change to get back his strength before I send him back to school. He has been away all this term, because of the measles, and it has been so nice having him with us.

T.E.

B

Patricia has been very busy with her war work. She goes and helps in a canteen twice a week, and fortunately meets some quite nice people. She is well, though of course it is very tiring for her; but Gurth must have a change, so I propose to bring him on Saturday for a short visit. I suppose you can find your sister and nephew a corner, even if you do think it necessary to fill up your house with a lot of awful aliens who ought to be interned. What I say is, nobody can really tell which of them are *spies*, however much they *pretend* to be against Hitler. I read a wonderful article by Lord Vansittart in the *Sunday Times*, which I enclose, because I think every Englishman ought to read it. Even if some of them are not spies, that is because they are Jews or Communists, which is equally un-British. But, of course, I shall be quite polite to them while I am staying with you, because they are your guests: only you must see to it there is somewhere to sit where they are not allowed to come.

I suppose that *horrid* Mr. Oman is still with you. I do wish you would get rid of him. He always looks to me as if he were plotting to steal the spoons. I am sure he imposes on you *dreadfully*. Patricia will not be coming with us, because I have arranged to get her invited to stay with some charming people who have been stopping in this hotel. They are very rich and have a lovely place in Worcestershire; and the mother is distantly related to Lord Baldwin.

I will let you know the time of our train, so that you can send the car to meet us. We cannot drive over, because of this *iniquitous* petrol rationing. It makes me furious to see the way some of the people here go joy-riding. Most of them seem to have no sense of patriotism at all, and not one of them has even offered to take Patricia for a run. I wrote to Mr Churchill to complain of the wicked waste, and other things but he did not even answer. Still, I think he is really rather splendid.

We are so looking forward to seeing you on Saturday,
Your affectionate sister,

QUEENIE.

Letter VIII.

FROM DAVID OMAN TO MRS. MOGGRIDGE.

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.*December 1st.*

DEAR MRS. MOGGRIDGE,—Dr. Sambourne has asked me to reply to your letter. He regrets to say that the house is very full at present, as we have so many refugees staying with us. In addition, Mr. Potts has written to say that he is coming over for the week-end on important business, so that the Doctor will be very much engaged. Also, I am afraid the car would not be available to meet you, as it is out of action at present. Dr. Sambourne requests me to add that we are having very bad weather, which he is sure would not be good for your son's convalescence. He is unable to write personally, as he is very busy in the laboratory; but I am requested to send his love. He hopes this will not upset your arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID OMAN.

Letter IX.

FROM MRS. MOGGRIDGE TO DR. SAMBOURNE.

POSHER'S HOTEL,
CUSHVILLE-ON-SEA,
DEVONSHIRE.*December 2nd.*

MY DEAR PERCY,—I have had a most *insolent* letter from your secretary, which I am *sure* you cannot have authorised. I again entreat you to get rid of him. This is to say that I have given up our rooms here, which have been let; so we cannot stay on, as the hotel is quite full. You know it is *impossible* to get in anywhere in these days. I must say, if you can find house and home for all these horrible refugees who have *no claim at all* upon you, I cannot understand how you can possibly refuse a roof to your own sister and her children when they are *homeless*. We shall be arriving on Saturday as arranged, and Patricia will be coming with us after all, because her friends have written saying they cannot have her just now, owing to domestic difficulties. Our train arrives at 3.45, and if your car is really out of order I shall expect you to have

a hired car to meet us at the station, as Gurth must not be kept waiting in the cold.

Your loving sister,
QUEENIE.

Letter X.

FROM MISS MARY PHILIP TO MRS. MOGGRIDGE.

EXCALIBUR HOUSE,
NEAR MIDDLEBURY,
BRIGSHIRE.

December 3rd.

DEAR MADAM,—You will not know me; but I am Dr Sambourne's new secretary. He wishes me to say that he will expect you all on Saturday and is arranging for Mr. Potts to pick you up in his car, as he will be driving over from the works that afternoon. I am afraid you will not be very comfortable here; but we will do our best. I hope you will not mind my reminding you to bring your ration books, at any rate if you are staying for longer than the week-end.

Yours very truly,
MARY PHILIP.

Letter XI.

FROM CHARLES MORLEY, FELLOW OF STUKEL' COLLEGE, BULLBRIDGE, TO DR. SAMBOURNE.

STUKELY COLLEGE,
BULLBRIDGE.

December 3rd.

MY DEAR DR. SAMBOURNE,—I place so much reliance on your goodwill that I have ventured, in the absence of time for consulting you, to tell Dr. Amadeus Franck, who has just been released from the Isle of Man, where he has been most unjustly detained right up to now, that he can rely on your hospitality if he comes to you without a more formal introduction. I fear you will find the poor fellow very low and out of sorts after his depressing experiences; but his more fortunate fellow-exiles who were released earlier will no doubt make their business to cheer him up. You are, of course, aware of Dr. Franck's European reputation as a political theorist, and have read his books. I have not met him myself; but tho

who know him tell me that he is a man of much charm. I am sure you will be pleased with him.

Thanking you for your kindness which enables us poor beggars in good causes to presume upon it without fear as to the result,

I am, Yours very sincerely,
CHARLES MORLEY.

Letter XII.

FROM DR. AMADEUS FRANCK TO DR. SAMBOURNE.

VARIORUM PRIVATE HOTEL,
BLOOMSBURY, W.C.1.

December 3rd.

DEAR SIR,—I understand from Professor Charles Morley, of the Society for International Reception and Assistance, that he has been so very kind as to arrange for me to stay with you a little while until I can find suitable work. I am, as you know, recently released from internment in the Isle of Man; and I value beyond measure the kindness of those English who do not regard all of my nation as their enemies because the Nazis have obscured our liberties. If convenient, I shall arrive with you on Saturday afternoon, and shall find my own way from the station with the aid of Professor Morley's directions.

Believe me, yours in international amity,
AMADEUS FRANCK (Dr.).

II. CURTAIN-RAISER

I

FRESH ARRIVALS AT EXCALIBUR HOUSE

GEORGE POTTS was in a foul temper by the time he got to Middlebury Junction, where he had agreed, much against his will, to pick up Mrs. Moggridge and her children. He had started out in fine weather, but had presently run into fog, which had slowed him down, and had been further delayed by a minor collision with a motorist who had lost his bearings and was on the wrong side of the road. Potts was quick-tempered; and there had been words, which had not speeded matters up. He was nearly an hour late at the station; and he devoutly hoped that his sister-in-law would have got tired of waiting and would have found some other conveyance to take her and her beastly brats to Excalibur House.

Potts cordially disliked Queenie Moggridge, who was his wife's sister as well as Dr. Sambourne's, nor had he any love for either Gurth or Patricia Moggridge. He regarded Mrs. Moggridge as a stuck-up, foolish, incorrigible snob, and was ready enough to lay the shortcomings of her children at her door. Patricia he did not seriously dislike, though he dismissed her as idle and ill-tempered, as was to be expected of her mother's daughter. Gurth was much worse than that—George Potts regarded him as a disgusting pig of a boy who overate, took no exercise and was all over pimples, was coddled by his mother when what he needed was a sound thrashing and plenty of hard work, and was habitually rude to his elders and out to scrounge anything he could. To be sure, Mr. Moggridge ought to bear some part of the responsibility for his unsatisfactory family; but he was seldom seen. Though there had been no formal separation, Mr. and Mrs. Moggridge seldom lived together. At one time, Moggridge had been a Civil Servant; but he had retired early, not of his own accord, because of a persistent habit of coming back to his office drunk after lunch. Since his retirement, he had subsisted on a small annuity, supplemented by occasional special allowances from his wife. Several times he had been "cured," and the two had renewed the attempt to live

together. But his reformations had never lasted long. Potts had not heard of him for some time past, and felt no desire ever to hear of him again.

As George Potts drove into the station yard, his hopes rose ; for there was no sign of Mrs. Moggridge or her children. The place was nearly deserted ; but as he drew up beside the entrance to the booking office a very tall stranger approached the car and, when he had let down the near window, inquired in excellent English, but with a German accent, whether he was Mr. Potts. George Potts having admitted his identity, the stranger proceeded to introduce himself as Dr. Franck, and to explain that he and Mrs. Moggridge had met on the platform, and that she had asked him to wait outside the station while she and her family went to get a cup of tea in the adjoining hotel.

Potts, with his habitual brusqueness, inquired how many people were wanting a lift. Dr. Franck replied that he could easily walk if there was no room, and went on to say that Mrs. Moggridge appeared to have a great deal of luggage, which she had left in his care.

"Well, I suppose we'd better shove the stuff on the car, and then see where we stand," said Potts. "Where is it?"

Franck replied that he would fetch the baggage, and darted off into the station, whence he presently emerged carrying a large trunk with remarkably little appearance of effort. Potts let down the carrier, and together they strapped it on. Then Franck, with a muttered word, vanished again into the station, and reappeared bearing four suitcases, two in each hand. These had to be stowed inside the car ; and it was then apparent that there was no possibility of getting in four passengers as well, in addition to the driver.

"What about your own luggage?" Potts asked. "Is that aboard?"

Franck disappeared again, and came back bearing a long, black suitcase of foreign build. This too having been stowed away, Potts said with a sigh, "I guess Patricia will have to sit on Gurth's knee—or vice versa. And I don't see how we're to fit you in."

"It is no matter," said Dr. Franck. "I shall walk."

"It's seven miles. It'll be dark too. And you don't know your way."

"I shall find it. There is no need for you to worry. Shall I fetch the lady for you?"

Potts suggested that Franck should go and find the

travellers, while he turned the car and took it to the hotel entrance. Franck instantly darted off.

Potts thought to himself, "Seems a helpful, sensible fellow that. Not very much foreign accent, either. And as strong as a horse. A damn sight better than most of Percy's refugees." He turned the car, and drove away towards the hotel.

Franck was waiting at the entrance. "Mrs. Moggridge says she will be a few minutes, because her son is being sick. She says train-travelling never agrees with him." He smiled amiably.

"Eaten too much tea, more like," said Potts brutally. "Here, if you're going to walk, you'd better be getting off. You take the left turn out of here, fork right when the road divides, go on four miles as straight as you can, and then ask again at a place called Aldermanston. They'll tell you. But it's the hell of a way. I wish I could squeeze you in."

Franck smiled again. "It is nothing. I like walking." He strode away into the dark.

Potts sat for some time in the car, waiting for the Moggridges to appear. At last, weary of waiting, he went into the hotel, and found Mrs. Moggridge in the lounge. He greeted her without enthusiasm.

"I say, Queenie, aren't you people ever coming?"

Mrs. Moggridge was a large blonde lady, very well dressed. She said, "What made you so late, George? You know how delicate Gurth is."

"Hell! There was fog half the way, and then a ruddy fool ran into me. You can thank your stars I got here at all. Why didn't you hire a car? Don't tell me you can't afford it, because I have to *earn* your dividends for you, and you've done damned well these last years."

"My dear George, you know perfectly well that in these times when one has paid one's iniquitous taxes there is nothing left. Besides, Gurth needed his tea."

"And made a pig of himself over it, I suppose."

"You know trains never agree with him. Patricia is with him now. We must tuck him up well in the car. I hope you have plenty of rugs."

Potts snorted. "Either you or he'll have to sit on top of the luggage. I can't think why women can't travel without all that stuff."

Mrs. Moggridge was saved the need of a retort by the sight of her son and daughter descending the stairs. "Here is Gurth," she said. "My poor boy, are you better?"

Gurth Moggridge glared at her balefully. "I feel rotten," he said; "but Pat wouldn't wait any longer."

His sister, a tall, thin young woman with an overpainted face, said only, "Oh, come on! Let's get started."

Potts said, "'Afternoon, Patricia. Gurth been overeating, as usual?"

The girl nodded in an off-hand way. Mrs. Moggridge got up, and began to collect her minor impedimenta. Potts led the little procession out into the dark.

There was a good deal of trouble before they got settled in the car. Mrs. Moggridge first mooted, and then discarded, the suggestion that Gurth should go in front. Finally, she went in the front seat, and Patricia and her brother were somehow squeezed in behind among the luggage, to the accompaniment of many complaints.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Moggridge, as Potts was about to drive away, "I forgot. What has happened to that foreigner I told to mind the luggage?"

"He has walked on," said Potts. "He seems a very decent fellow. I didn't half like leaving him to find his own way."

"He has no right to expect everything," said Mrs. Moggridge. "He ought to be very grateful to Percy for putting him up. I'm sure I cannot imagine why Percy will take up with that sort of person."

Her tone grated on George Potts. He said, "I suppose after all they're human, the same as you and me."

Gurth intervened from behind. "We had a foreigner at school, and he was an absolute stinker. Everybody had fun, scoring off him."

Potts let in the clutch too fast, and the car lurched forward. "Be careful, George," exclaimed Mrs. Moggridge. "Do remember Gurth is an invalid."

Potts repressed a desire to bump them again, and drove on slowly out of the station yard into the street. For a while there was silence. It was broken at length by Mrs. Moggridge saying, "I do wish, George, you would speak to Percy about getting rid of that horrid person, Mr. Oman."

"Why should he get rid of him? I believe Oman's pretty good at his job."

"His rudeness is unbearable. He actually wrote telling us not to come."

"Perhaps Percy told him to. Why did he anyway? You'll be damned uncomfortable"

"I wish you would not swear in front of Gurth. Why shouldn't I come and stay with my own brother?"

"For lots of reasons. First, as I said, you'll be damned uncomfortable. Secondly, you hate refugees, and the house is full of them. Thirdly, you know very well Percy doesn't want you. So, why do you come?"

"Brothers and sisters ought to see one another in these dreadful times. Percy ought to be pleased to have his niece and nephew, and see how they are growing. I always say, blood is thicker than water."

"A bit too thick, sometimes. I suppose you really came because you heard Percy was thinking of changing his will."

Mrs. Moggridge gave a start. "I have heard of no such thing," she said; "and, what's more, I don't believe it."

"He is, though," Potts answered. He invented maliciously on the spur of the moment. "I believe he has some notion of endowing Excalibur House permanently as a rest home for refugees."

"He couldn't be so *wicked*. I don't believe a word of it," said Mrs. Moggridge hotly. "He has no right to leave his money away from his own flesh and blood." She paused. "I won't have such things talked of in front of the children. It is—indecent."

"What's that, Mother?" asked Patricia, who had been having a private altercation with her brother behind. "What did you say was indecent?"

"Never mind, darling," said her mother. "It was only something your uncle said."

Potts shouted back, "I was only saying your uncle was thinking of leaving his money to the Cats' Home, and it seems to have upset your mother."

"Is he?" Patricia asked. "That would be a bit of a sell, wouldn't it?"

"I hate cats," said Gurth.

Mrs. Moggridge spoke. "I must have a serious talk with you about Percy, George. In my opinion, he is not fit to be allowed to manage his affairs any longer. Would any sane man go on as he is behaving—filling up his house with a lot of spies and traitors and grudging his own kith and kin even a week-end?"

"I doubt if kindness to foreigners is certifiable, yet," Potts answered. "It may be, if the war goes on a bit longer."

"I suppose you mean that to be funny," said his sister-in-

law. "I see nothing funny in it. I think the whole thing is positively disgraceful."

"Percy's a crank, and a dashed nuisance," said Potts. "But he isn't mad. I sometimes wish he were. It'd simplify things a lot, at the works, if he couldn't interfere with his silly notions. At this very moment, he's being a pig-headed idiot about something really important. That's why I'm here this week-end—to try to talk him round. As you know, he's the principal shareholder, and has absolute control when he cares to exercise it. You and Amelia can just be outvoted. Look here, I'd better tell you about it, because we may have to have a formal pow-wow, and, if it comes to that, I shall be relying on you to back me up, as a matter of sound business. I will say this for you, Queenie, you've always had quite a head for business—for a woman. I hold Amelia's power of attorney, as you know; but that's no use unless we can get Percy's consent."

George Potts proceeded to explain, as simply as he could, the circumstances under which it had become indispensable for Sambourne, Swallow & Co. to run a large overdraft at the bank, though they had always hitherto financed the business out of their own resources. Mrs. Moggridge, who had in fact quite a good head for such affairs, expressed herself very strongly on Potts's side, and vigorously denounced her brother's absurd prejudices against the banking fraternity. Before she had half done, Potts was repenting strongly having taken her into his confidence; for he foresaw that her intervention with her brother might well produce just the opposite result to that which he desired. He entreated her to leave him to handle the problem, and to say nothing about it to Percy Sambourne until he had done all he could to bring the obstinate old idiot round. Mrs. Moggridge was at length persuaded to agree to this; and Potts felt happier. He even regained a sardonic good humour when his sister-in-law reverted to what he had said, quite untruly as far as he knew, about Percy's intention of changing his will. He did not give up his deception. He told her that he had no exact knowledge of what Dr. Sambourne was meaning to do, but that he had reason to believe that he was thinking of taking action almost at once.

They were still on this point when the car drew up outside the main entrance to Excalibur House. Potts got out, and rang the bell, while the three Moggridges remained in the car, showing no sign of a readiness to help with the luggage. Potts

waited for some time ; but no one answered his ring. He rang again, with the same result, and then again. He went back to the car. He said, " I never knew such a house. No one seems to be bothering to answer the bell ; but I suppose we'd better get the stuff off the car. Here, Gurth, look lively." He flung open the rear door.

Gurth emerged, looking far from lively, followed by Patricia ; and Mrs. Moggridge also got out and approached the front door, muttering that it was " disgraceful." Potts, without help from any of them, began shoving out the suitcases and placing them on the steps leading to the door. Gurth and Patricia stood by, looking on, while their mother renewed the onslaught on the bell. Potts was unstrapping the big trunk when the door at length opened, and he heard Mrs. Moggridge's voice uplifted in loud complaint.

" I cannot imagine why people cannot make proper arrangements for answering the bell. I shall speak strongly to Dr. Sambourne about the way we have been kept waiting. It is simply disgraceful. My son has caught his death of cold. He will have to go to bed at once with a hot water bottle, and I shall need some strong beef-tea. Please see about it at once when you have carried in the things."

The person by whom the door had been opened was a short, stout lady with a formidable moustache. She said, " This 'ouse, it is terrible. Nobody does nozzing as they should be done. You 'ave came to stop 'ere, so ? I will fetch, yes. But you must spik about the bif-tea. For me to spik, it would be no use. Ach, it is the young boy who 'as the cold. Your English climate, it is terrible."

" I suppose you must be one of my brother's visitors," said Mrs. Moggridge. " Come in, darlings, out of the cold." She swept her brood into the house, and shut the door firmly behind her, leaving Potts outside. " Will you please fetch a servant at once."

" Ach, you are ze good doctor's schwester. I am Dr. Eva Glück. I am from Vienna. It is terrible to think of my beautiful Wien in these times. Those peegs, the Nazis . . ."

" Will you kindly find somebody at once to show us our rooms?" said Mrs. Moggridge coldly. " You can tell me the story of your life some other time."

" Oh, yes ! I shall be so sharmed. Anozzer time. But now you are cold and cross, and I forget my manners. Oh, yes ! I shall find somebody zoon. It will be all right. You shall see." She smiled helpfully.

Mrs. Moggridge stamped her foot. "If you *will* stand there talking and doing nothing, I suppose I shall have to attend to myself," she said. She picked up a large brass dinner bell from the hall-stand, and gave a loud peal. "Perhaps that will make somebody come," she said furiously.

It did. In fact, too many. Almost in an instant, the hall was crowded.

A stout elderly gentleman, with a large beard and spectacles and a mass of grey hair, came out of the library, on the right of the hall. Any one would have put him down in an instant for what he was—a Teutonic professor who carried his weight of learning always about with him. This was Professor Meyerbeer, and he was followed closely by his wife, as stout as he was, and the very pattern of a German *Fräulein*. She bore in her arms a large mass of greenish woollen stuff—evidently the knitting at which she had been interrupted. Almost at the same moment, a small, dark, gesticulating figure, flapping a towel, appeared behind the newcomers, from a lavatory just inside the front door on the left. This was Dr. Rossini, the one Italian who was included within the range of Dr. Sambourne's hospitality. In addition to these, a blond, bearded man, very tall and thin, and well dressed, came running downstairs very fast; and an exceedingly short-sighted, scrubby-looking little man, with close-cropped hair, first poked his head round the corner of a door towards the back of the hall, and then came slowly forward, inquiring gutturally what was the matter. These two were Professor de Winters, from Holland, and Dr. Kurt Aronson, from Vienna. As they gathered in the hall, chucking gutturally, the front-door bell began ringing again, continuously, to the accompaniment of a tattoo on the door-knocker.

There was a babel of voices, all speaking various kinds of broken English.

"Oh, do be quiet, can't you?" cried Mrs. Moggridge. "Be quiet, and listen to me. Are any of you the servants?"

There was a dead silence.

"I want my brother, Dr. Sambourne. I want a servant to show us to our rooms. I want somebody to see to the luggage—at once." She pounced on the man who had emerged from the lavatory. "Here, you! Can you speak English?"

The man answered, "Oh, yes, I spak English pairfectly. But I tink I hear someone at the door." He shook himself free of Mrs. Moggridge's detaining grasp, and threw the front door open.

George Potts came in, bearing a suitcase. "Why in hell did you shut the door in my face?" he said angrily. "Here, I want somebody to help me in with the trunk." He picked on the man who had let him in. "You look able-bodied," he said. "Do you mind giving me a hand?"

"Charmed! I am Dr. Rossini," said the little man.

"Then come on," said Potts.

Mrs. Moggridge seized hold of her brother-in-law. "George, never mind the luggage now. I cannot make these people understand. Oh, where are the servants? Where is my brother? I never knew such a house."

"Dr. Sambourne, I expect, is in the laboratory with Mr. Oman," said the fair, bearded man. "Can I be of any assistance, madam? My name is de Wauters. It will be a pleasure."

"Do you know where our rooms are—or where to find the servants?"

"The servants, I venture to imagine, are in the basement. They have, in my experience, no love to answer the bell. I think I can find someone who will know your rooms, if you will allow me. And perhaps Dr. Rossini and Dr. Aronson will be so kind to carry up the baggages." He gave a courtly gesture with his right hand, and proceeded with the air of a major-domo to usher Mrs. Moggridge towards the stairs at the back of the hall.

"Come, Gurth. Come, Patricia," Mrs. Moggridge cried. She turned menacingly to Dr. Eva Glück. "You go and find me a hot-water bottle. I shall need it at once. And be sure that the water is really hot."

Dr. Glück smiled amiably. She flapped her hands. "Bot, if I knew where, I should be sharmed. I will go inquire. Miss Philip will know, if I can find her. Can any one tell me where is Miss Philip?"

Professor de Wauters, from a little way up the stairs, called back, "I believe Miss Philip is preparing the bedrooms, because Mrs. Mudge refused to prepare them. It will be best, madam, if you will permit me to guide you to Miss Philip's presence."

"For heaven's sake take me to somebody with some sense," said Mrs. Moggridge. "Tell George to see the luggage is brought up at once. Come with me, children."

The procession vanished round the corner of the staircase, and the babel of tongues broke out again. Dr. Glück said, "I do my best to be amiable to ze lady, bot she is so rude to me as

one peeg. Is it not so? As one peeg. Let her find her own hot-water bottle." She retired into the library.

Dr. Meyerbeer said in German, "Bertha, I command you, you shall not be put upon. I foresee this woman will put upon you, and I do not suffer it. You shall not be a doormat for her."

George Potts and Dr. Rossini came in, carrying the heavy trunk. They dumped it down in the hall, and Rossini mopped his brow with a large coloured handkerchief. "Somebody give a hand with the other cases," said Potts. He took hold of Dr. Aronson, and pushed him towards the door. The little Austrian after a moment's hesitation obediently went out and picked up a suitcase, carried it in, and put it down in the hall.

"Does anybody know whether the garage is locked?" Potts asked. "I want to put my car away."

"It will be open, I think," said Dr. Rossini. "You know where to find it?"

"Oh, yes, I know. I'll go and shove the car away. Can you fellows manage the luggage? That little one's mine; the rest are Mrs. Moggridge's or her family's. Oh, no, I forgot. That big case there belongs to a man I met at the station. He's walking over. Said his name was Franck. He's coming to stay too."

Potts went out, leaving the front door open. It was very cold in the hall. Dr. Meyerbeer hurried his wife back into the library, leaving the luggage problem to others. Dr. Chick, who had come back, selected the small suitcase which Potts had indicated as his own, and said she would carry it up to the first landing. Dr. Rossini and Dr. Aronson were left contemplating the big trunk and the rest of the luggage. They approached the trunk, took hold of it one at each end, and made a half-hearted attempt at lifting it. Then they let go, looked at each other meditatively for a moment, exchanged a shrug of the shoulders and a glance of understanding, and tiptoed silently away through a door at the back of the hall.

The hall was left deserted, except for the forsaken luggage and the dirty towel which Dr. Rossini had hung down on a chair. The grandfather clock struck six. In defiance of all black-out regulations, a stream of light escaped into the drive through the open front door.

BEDROOM SCENE

THE reception met with by the Moggridges on their arrival at Excalibur House was not out of keeping with the habits of that peculiar establishment. Mr. and Mrs. Mudge, who had already a lively grudge against their employer on account of what Mrs. Mudge termed "cluttering up of the place with a clam-jamfry of outlandish aliens what ought to be shot out of hand and then locked up if they got their deserts," were by no means pleased when they were told that Mrs. Moggridge and her children were also coming to stay. George Potts they were willing enough to receive, because he gave little trouble and tipped handsomely. But Mrs. Moggridge and the Mudges were old antagonists; and her tips by no means made up in generosity for the amount of attention which she was wont to expect. The Mudges would have been seriously overworked if they had attempted to keep Excalibur House in any sort of decent order—which they did not. Dr. Sambourne himself was almost wholly indifferent to such matters, provided that his food was tolerably cooked; and the discomforts of the refugee guests could be disregarded with impunity. David Oman did indeed wage fitful warfare with the Mudges about the disgracefully dirty condition of the house. But he was regularly worsted by the Mudges' blank refusal to carry out his orders. It was useless, as he had found, to appeal to Dr. Sambourne, who merely told him he could not be bothered; and, besides, where were alternative domestics to be found under war conditions if the Mudges gave notice? David Oman had learnt that the safest course was to let matters slide, in the knowledge that the Mudges would, in the last resort, do just the amount of work that was necessary in order to prevent Excalibur house from becoming positively insanitary.

Mary Philip, when she joined the staff, had been warned by her predecessor against attempting to interfere with the very curious household arrangements. Phyllis Monkhouse had told her that she would have to keep her own rooms clean, because no one else would do it for her, and to look after her own personal chores, and had added that she would only run into trouble if she attempted either to stimulate the energies of the Mudges or to make things better for the refugees by trying to do jobs for them herself. In defiance of this advice, Mary had

in practically told her to mind her own business ;
ees, whose efforts she had set out to organise on
ines, had only quarrelled the worse, with her as
with another. Mary thereafter tried to content
eeping tolerable cleanliness in her own quarters,
ng as amiable to all parties as the situation

announcement of the Moggridges' impending
used a crisis. The Mudges had flatly refused to
preparations for receiving these unwelcome
itors. David Oman, appealed to, had shrugged
, and refused to take any action ; and Dr.
o whom she had gone as a last resort, had only
fully expected that the Mudges, whatever they
uld in fact do what was necessary when the time
had then been driven back to plead again with
she refused to stir a finger ; and so the situation
until the visitors were actually due to arrive.
been made ready for George Potts ; and Frau
id Dr. Glück had arranged another for the
Dr. Franck. But for the Moggridges nothing had
l ; and at last Mary Philip had set to work
eady for them herself.

calibur House was, this was no easy matter ;
rooms left unoccupied were those which had been
a long time and were in any case the worst in
ary had been driven to press a reluctant Dr.
her service to fetch coals and get fires lighted.
to turn herself into a charwoman and clean the
then there had been trouble about sheets and
. Mudge had declared that there were none left,
ed to surrender the key to the linen-closet ; and
compelled to burgle the closet by finding a key
open it on a bunch in a box in the tool-room.
re had been too few blankets ; and she had been
l. Finally, she had made a tour of the rooms, and
. Glück was apparently in the habit of sleeping
od thick double blankets. She had confiscated
nd, with the aid of what she had found in the
couple of rugs, had managed to make shift.
seen still busy with the last lap of her f-----

when the car arrived—very late, as we know; and as the apartments she had assigned to the Moggridges were away in a wing at the back of the house, she had heard nothing of the altercations which had been proceeding in the front hall.

She had nearly finished her task when she heard a female voice uplifted in complaint and the soft, cultured voice of Professor de Wauters making smooth answer. The voices drew near; and Queenie Moggridge, followed by her family, swept into the room, while de Wauters remained in the open doorway.

Mrs. Moggridge surveyed the apartment destined for her reception. Despite Mary Philip's efforts, it looked dingy enough. Mrs. Moggridge growled. She said fiercely to the assembly at large, "This room is disgusting. I refuse to sleep in it. Someone must fetch my brother at once."

Mary Philip said, "I am very sorry it is not nicer. It is really the nicest room I could find. You see, we have so many people staying with us."

Queenie Moggridge looked witheringly at her. "I suppose you are the housemaid," she said. "I should have imagined that my brother would have seen the need of paying some personal attention to my comfort."

Mary, very conscious of being still in the overalls which she had put on for her self-imposed task of cleaning the rooms, said, "I am not the housemaid. I am Dr. Sambourne's secretary. I did my best for you because I didn't want you to find that nothing had been done for your reception. But it is not my duty to clean rooms; and I will not be talked to as if I were dirt."

Queenie Moggridge, despite her anger, realised that she had made a slip. "I did not mean to be rude, I am sure. But I will not sleep here. And Gurth must be shown to a proper room at once. This place is like an ice-house."

"I am afraid the fire has not been lighted very long. But really I did my best. Shall I show you your son's and daughter's rooms?"

"If they are anything like this one, I shall not allow them to sleep in them."

Mary Philip sighed. "I suppose you had better see them," she said, and led the way. The others, including de Wauters, all followed.

The two small rooms which Mary had fitted up for Patricia and Gurth were even dingier than Mrs. Moggridge's. They faced east and west respectively, and were icy-cold; and in Gurth's the fire was smoking abominably. Queenie Mogg-

ridge's fury burst out anew. She once more angrily demanded the immediate presence of her brother. Mary Philip said unwillingly that she would go and try to find him; and in her absence the Moggridges held an indignation meeting on the top landing, with Professor de Wauters every now and then putting in a soothing word.

"I find something charming, if at times inconvenient," said the professor, "in your English unconventionality. In my own country such a residence as this would be impossible. We Dutch are too tidy, and too commonplace, for your splendid originality of temperament. I admire immensely the aplomb with which you English endure conditions which . . ."

"Oh, do you?" Mrs. Moggridge interrupted. "Then let me tell you I do not admire them at all. And as for speaking of . . . this sort of thing as characteristic of the English, I regard it as an insult."

Professor de Wauters bowed. "Accept my assurance, madam, that no insult was intended. I was, mistakenly perhaps, endeavouring to make the best of a very distressing situation. It is my practice to look always on the bright side. I have found it very useful during the past year. May I venture to commend it to you as a state of mind befitting a philosophic spirit in these troublous times. My own experiences . . ."

"I am not a philosopher," retorted Mrs. Moggridge, "and I have no wish to be one. I am in the habit of being treated with the consideration that is due to me; and I have every intention of seeing to it that I am properly treated in this house."

The professor gave a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Therein, madam, if I may say so, you display an optimism far exceeding mine. Dr. Sambourne is a man of the greatest benevolence, and I am exceedingly grateful to him. But his household arrangements undoubtedly leave much to be desired. They would indeed be intolerable if they were not contemplated in the spirit of the highest philosophy."

"Oh, do stop talking about philosophy, and do something useful instead. Who is sleeping in the best bedroom—the blue room in front on the first floor, I mean?"

The professor blushed. "I . . . I am not certain which room you mean."

"The blue room over the dining-room—next door to my brother's bedroom. I want to know who is sleeping there."

De Wauters bowed. "I think you refer to the apartment

which Dr. Sambourne has been so good as to fit up as a bed-sitting-room for my unworthy self," he said gently. "There are my poor household goods—my books, the few pictures I have been able to save from my misfortunes, in short . . ."

"That is my room," Mrs. Moggridge interrupted. "I always sleep there. You will have to turn out."

Professor de Wauters blinked. He said nothing.

"And Patricia will have the pink room over the study, and Gurth the green room next to it. Is there somebody sleeping in there too?"

"The pink apartment, madam, has been assigned to the excellent Dr. Eva Glück. I believe the green room was being prepared for Mr. Potts."

"George can sleep here," said Mrs. Moggridge. "And the Glück woman will have to turn out too."

De Wauters closed his eyes. "Beyond doubt, madam, everything shall be as Dr. Sambourne wishes."

"I can't think where that girl has got to. She ought to have been back by now."

"Dr. Sambourne does not love those who disturb him when he is at work in the laboratory."

"Well, I can't wait any longer," said Queenie Moggridge. "Come, Gurth, I am going to put you to bed in the green room, while this gentleman arranges to move out of mine." She led the way along the corridor and downstairs to the first floor. Half-way down the stairs they met Mary Philip running towards them.

"I am very sorry," said Mary, much discomposed and out of breath. "Dr. Sambourne says he is in the middle of a most important experiment, and cannot possibly come now."

"Did you tell him why I wanted him?" Queenie Moggridge demanded.

"Yes, and he said we were to settle it among ourselves. That is what he would say, you know," she added apologetically.

"I'll soon settle it," Mrs. Moggridge answered, setting her teeth. She made for the first floor.

During this dialogue Professor de Wauters slipped quietly away, entered the blue room, and locked the door. Scarcely had he done so, when Mrs. Moggridge reached out her hand for the door-handle. She turned it in vain, then shook it and tried again, and then put her weight against the door, which defied her efforts. She then pounded upon it, crying out that it must be opened at once. But Professor de Wauters within

seated in a comfortable arm-chair, was soothing his spirits by turning over a portfolio of choice engravings, and made no move. He only smiled gently, muttered, "*Oh! la, la,*" softly to himself, and continued to admire a particularly fine engraving of a gargoyle, which somehow reminded him strongly of Gurth Moggridge.

Meanwhile, outside the door, Mary Philip wondered what could have come over her inconvenient guest. "That is Professor de Wauters' room," she said. "He was here just now; but he seems to have gone. I expect he has locked it and taken the key."

Mrs. Moggridge made no answer. She pounded again on the door, uttering shrill yelps. But there was no answer, and at last she gave it up. "Gurth," she cried. "Come here at once. I am going to put you to bed in the green room." She strode to the back of the landing and flung another door open, to reveal George Potts standing beside the bed *minus* his trousers.

"What the hell?" said George Potts. "Good lord, Queenie, what's the matter?"

"The matter!" retorted Mrs. Moggridge, unabashed. "Everything's the matter. You have to get out of this room at once, George. I am going to put Gurth to bed in it."

"The devil you are! Hasn't he got a room of his own? Mudge told me this was mine."

"We have been put to sleep in rooms that are not fit for pigs, and I am not going to stand it. If Percy must give house-room to these abominable foreigners, he might at least put them and not me to sleep in the attics. I insist on having the blue room; and Gurth must have this one, and Patricia the pink room. They are the only decent rooms in the house, except Percy's own."

George Potts whistled. He had been standing during this speech in his pants, with Patricia and Gurth and Mary Philip all goggling at him. "I'll be damned if I give up this room for Gurth—or for anybody," he said. "Here, all of you, clear out. I want to put on my trousers."

There was a pause; but Mrs. Moggridge did not stir.

"If you don't get out," said George, "I'll put you out." He began to count. "One—Two—Three—Four." Mrs. Moggridge got out, as he advanced menacingly upon her. George Potts banged the door, and locked it.

Mrs. Moggridge, bloody but unbowed, advanced upon the pink room, and flung open the door. A frowst swept out into

the corridor. Dr. Eva Glück was discovered seated at her dressing-table, attending to her face. She rose, a quaine sight, and faced the intruder. Mrs. Moggridge said brusquely, "This is my daughter's room. You will have to move."

Dr. Glück went all mottled with indignation. "Het is my room. Eet is not your daughter's room, not at all. How d dare you come into my chamber widout ze knock." She saw Gurth grinning at her appearance, and turned on him. "You nasty, rude, dirty fat peeg of a boy, what for you laugh! I make you laugh ze ozzer side of your soorly face." She made towards him, armed with a hairbrush.

Mrs. Moggridge stepped furiously in between. "You dare touch my son!" she exclaimed. The two women glared ominously at each other. They looked as if about to scratch. Mary Philip managed to get between them.

"Oh, *please*," she said, between laughter and tears, "please don't fight, or it will be too much. Please, Mrs. Moggridge, please. . . ."

Queenie Moggridge drew back. "I have certainly no intention of brawling with that low-bred person," she said, eyeing her antagonist warily.

"You dare call me low-bred," retorted Dr. Glück. "I spit at you. You are one beastly conceited bitch."

Queenie Moggridge uttered what can only be described as a yelp. "I have never been so insulted in my life," she said. "I shall go to my brother and make him turn you out of the house at once."

"You are a rude, 'orrible woman," screamed Dr. Glück. "I sink you are mental. You 'ave no self-restraint. Vill you leave my chamber, or must I t'row you?"

Once more Mrs. Moggridge was compelled to retreat into the corridor. Mary Philip said, "If your son is really unwell, perhaps he had better lie down in his room for the time being while we see what is to be done. And if you do not like your rooms, perhaps you will go to Dr. Sambourne in the laboratory and speak to him yourself."

"I certainly will," said Mrs. Moggridge. She turned to her son. "My poor boy, how are you feeling? You must be nearly dead."

"I'm all right," said Gurth morosely. "And I won't lie down in that room—or anywhere. I'm not going to miss the fun."

"But you must, darling, or you will be so ill."

"Rubbish, Mother," said Patricia suddenly—the first

word she had spoken since their arrival. "Gurth's well. He only overate, and it has passed off."

"You are both very unfeeling children," said Mr ridge. "Neither of you thinks of what I suffer. Come, suppose you had better. . . . Gurth! Gurth! GU

These invocations were caused by Gurth taking into his own hands by removing himself to the top of it whence he proceeded to slide down the banisters. His pursued him, uttering startled cries. Mary Philip and Moggridge were left alone.

"Oh dear! Oh dear!" said Mary. "Whatever next?"

"I propose to get ready for dinner," said Patricia. "time is dinner, by the way?"

"It is supposed to be half-past seven," Mary answered, "but I dare say it won't be. Even if the servants are ready in time, it may be ages before Dr. Sambourne. Oh, do you mind telling Mrs. Moggridge, when she comes I mean, tell her it is supposed to be at half-past. I am I forgot."

Patricia nodded. "Does one dress?" she asked.

"Oh dear, no. There is no need. We are not a dressy household."

"Well," said Patricia, "I shan't wait for Mother's lousy; but I see my bag over there, at the top of the stairs, and I propose to take it and unpack on the assumption that I'm not likely to do better. I hate wrangling, don't you?"

Mary smiled. She said, "You don't know what it is to find someone who doesn't fuss."

"Oh, I don't fuss," said Patricia. "I just curse in my heart. Besides, nothing's worth fussing over, and I hate being a fool." She picked up her bag and marched off upstairs.

3

FRACAS IN THE DINING-ROOM

By the time Mrs. Moggridge reached the ground floor, the doctor had vanished. But Dr. Sambourne was just entering the passage which led to the back regions, beyond which the laboratory was situated. Queenie Moggridge rushed at him. "Percy, what do you mean by not coming when I see

you? Every one has been insulting me ever since I arrived. The young person who says she is your secretary demands that I shall sleep in an odious, damp, icy room like a dungeon, and Gurth is very ill and probably catching his death of cold at this moment, and your visitors have all treated me abominably, and I demand to be put in the blue room where I always sleep, and Patricia must have the pink room, of course, and Gurth must have a nice warm room with a good fire, and you will have to put dinner back because we shall have to unpack and dress, and Gurth must have beef-tea sent up to him and a water bottle, and I . . ."

Dr. Sambourne held up his hand. "Stop!" he said. "I am busy with important work, and cannot possibly be bothered with all these things. Get Oman. Get Miss Philip. Get somebody. They will attend to you."

"But they won't," Mrs. Moggridge expostulated. "I tell you it was your Miss Philip who put us in those horrible rooms. And I won't speak to Mr. Oman. Percy, have you no sense of what is fitting--of what is owing to me?"

"None whatever," said Dr. Sambourne. "I have no doubt the rooms assigned to you are the best available. You invited yourself here, Queenie, and you must put up with the consequences."

"I won't. I . . ."

Again Dr. Sambourne held up his hand. "It is no use talking to me, Queenie. Oman sees to all these things--or you can try Mudge. I have other things to think of."

"But you must . . ."

"I must not." Her brother brushed past her, and walked unconcernedly up the stairs.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Moggridge. She collapsed into the hall chair and burst into tears.

A foreign voice broke in upon her sobs.

"Can I be of any help, please?"

Mrs. Moggridge looked up, and beheld a fat, middle-aged lady of very Teutonic appearance.

"Zomezing was ze matter. Zomezing is often ze matter in zis house. Shall I vetch zomebody--or zomezing? I 'ave de zmelting zalts upstairs."

Queenie Moggridge clutched at a straw. "Have you a nice bedroom?" she inquired.

The lady looked rather startled. "You would go zere?" she asked. "'Ave they not zhown you de room vere you are to zleep?"

"I cannot possibly sleep in the terrible room I have been put into. I must have a proper room."

The fat lady shook her head sadly. "I cannot take you to wash yourself in my room," she said. "Dr. Meyerbeer is here, and he prepare himself for dinner."

Queenie's spirit was getting broken, and she could not get out the words to suggest that Frau Meyerbeer and her husband should resign their room to her. She said wretchedly, "I suppose I shall have to go to that dreadful room after all—to dress. I shall certainly insist on a change after dinner. I suppose somebody will have put me some hot water."

"Ach, no," said Frau Meyerbeer. "It is ze rule zat ve fetches our own hot water, or washes in de bathroom. But I zink Signor Rossini is having a bath in the bathroom on ze upper floor, and I have zeen Dr. Zambourne jost now enter ze bathroom on the first floor."

"Then where can I get any hot water?"

Frau Meyerbeer shook her head. "It will be necessary to wait," she said. Then she relented. "I vill find you zome," she said. "Dr. Meyerbeer vill have zome left, perhaps. You gon mit me."

After a moment's hesitation, Queenie Moggridge followed Frau Meyerbeer up the stairs to the first-floor landing. Frau Meyerbeer advanced towards the door of the bathroom and stood listening, with a finger to her lips. "Dr. Zambourne is ere," she whispered. "He always zung to himself while he wash." Queenie rattled at the door, and a voice from within bellowed, "Go away."

"It is I, Percy," said Queenie. "I want some hot water."

"Plenty upstairs," the voice bellowed back. "I'm having bath."

"I suppose we must try upstairs," wailed Mrs. Moggridge, sitting near desperation.

"Ve try," said Frau Meyerbeer, wagging her head. They mounted to the second floor. This time it was Frau Meyerbeer who tried the bathroom door, and found it locked. "Vill you be long?" she cried to Rossini within. "He say he vill be ere," she reported, after an inarticulate noise had answered her. "You show me where is your bedroom, please."

Very reluctantly, Mrs. Moggridge led the way to the deserted chamber. Frau Meyerbeer looked in and shivered. "It is cold," she said. "Vairy gut! You stop zere, and I bring you ze water."

"I must have my luggage as well."

"It is zat, yes, no?" said Frau Meyerbeer, pointing to the big trunk and two suitcases, which someone had already carried into the room. Mrs. Moggridge felt somehow that their arrival sealed her fate. Frau Meyerbeer patted her consolingly and waddled off, promising to return with hot water. No sooner had she gone, than a gong resounded through the house. Was it the dressing gong, Queenie Moggridge wondered, or did it mean that dinner was ready? The sound made her feel uncommonly hungry; but after her experiences she could not feel hopeful about the culinary arrangements.

Suddenly she remembered Gurth's foot and doubtless by this time prostrate with illness. Leaving the open suitcase in which she had been delving, she rushed distractedly from the room. Frau Meyerbeer, returning a little later, found it empty. She deposited the half-can of lukewarm water in the wash-basin, and looked round vainly for a towel to cover it with. Mary Philip had forgotten the towels. Frau Meyerbeer gave a little disapproving grunt, covered the can with the wash-stand mat, and waddled away to wash in cold water in her own room. She knew there would be a second gong in anything from ten minutes to half an hour, according to Mrs. Mudge's mood.

Gurth Moggridge, meanwhile, had been in the dining room, sampling such food and drink as he could find. He ate a number of biscuits out of a box, took a pull at a decanter which contained port and was reserved for Dr. Sambourne's exclusive use, and then again felt sick. At this stage Mudge surprised him.

"Lord, Master Gurth, what are you a-doing? You be off, and get yourself washed for dinner. I'm a-going to lay the table."

"I'm feeling ill," said Gurth.

"Are you?" said Mudge unsympathetically. "I s'pose you been pinching the vittles." He went to the sideboard, picked up the decanter, and eyed it critically. "Here! You've been a-drinking this. You will catch it. My word!"

Gurth only groaned.

"You get right out of this," Mudge went on. "What with all these furriners, I can't be expected to put up with you too. Out you get."

Gurth, however, refused to stir, and presently Mudge left him where he was, and proceeded to lay the table. "Let me see. 'Ow many of 'em?" he soliloquised. "There's the

doctor, and that dratted Oman, and Miss Philip. That's three. And the Meyerbeers and the Eyetalian and the little Yid makes seven. And the female with the whiskers is eight, and the bloody Dutchman's nine. And Mr. Potts, he makes ten -- and the only gent among the lot of 'em. And three of you lot " (he jerked a thumb at the prostrate Gurth) " makes thirteen. And that's bad luck. But I was to lay one extr'y for the new foreigner who's expected -- bad luck to him. Hey?" This last word was addressed to Gurth Moggridge, who answered feebly, "What?"

"D'you know, has another of the turners turned up?"

"How do I know?" Gurth answered. "Unless you mean the tall chap we met at the station. He was an Austrian, he said."

"That'll be 'im," said Mudge. As he talked, he had been dumping down cutlery round the long table. "Foreigners 'ere, and foreigners there, till a man can't call 'is country 'is own. I calls it wicked."

"So does Mother," said Gurth. "She doesn't like foreigners, and nor do I."

"Oo would?" Mudge retorted, "'Comin' 'ere and takin' the bread out of honest men's mouths. Why can't they stop in their own country?"

There was no one present to enlighten Mudge as to the reasons why certain foreigners found it inconvenient to remain in their native lands. So he went on, "How many pairs of 'ands does the doctor think I got? Expectin' me to go workin' myself to death cleanin' up their messes." His voice rose. "And now you and your mother and your sister and all come and invite yourselves 'ere, and put the lid on it. Huh! didn't I tell you to get out of this?" He approached Gurth menacingly.

Gurth Moggridge, who was again feeling rather better, rose as he approached, put his head well down, and butted Mudge in the stomach. Mudge gave a sickening gurgle, and they both collapsed on the floor. At this moment Mrs. Moggridge came into the room. She uttered a startled cry and rushed up to her son.

"My poor boy, are you hurt?"

Gurth got slowly to his feet. "No, but I jolly well hope he is," he said vindictively. "He is a nasty, rude old man, and 'm glad I butted him."

Mudge, sitting on the floor, gasped out, "I'll have you up for assault and battery, I will." He rose to his feet and faced

Mrs. Moggridge. "'E's been stealing the port, 'e 'as, and then letting on 'e wasn't feeling well. You wait till I get at 'im."

Queenie Moggridge felt unequal to further combats. She said with dignity, "Gurth, come with me at once and be put to bed."

"I won't," said Gurth. "I want my dinner."

"At any rate do come and get washed."

"Oh, all right. Have you found me a proper room?"

"No, not yet. You will have to make the best of it, my poor boy."

"Can't we go back to the hotel, Mother?"

"Not to-night. It is too late. Besides, they have let the rooms."

"I hate this house. Where's Uncle Percy?"

"Your uncle, I am sorry to say, has been exceedingly rude."

Gurth considered this. "As long as we get some dinner," he said. Then, after a pause, "I say, Mother, do we have to eat with all these foreigners?"

"I am afraid so."

"It'll be worse than the people at the hotel."

"Much worse. But we must make the best of it."

Long before Mrs. Moggridge uttered this highly uncharacteristic remark, Mudge had grumbled himself out of the room. Mrs. Moggridge led her errant son upstairs, and washed him in her own room, in the last of the lukewarm water. She was engaged in this operation, when there was a knock at the door. Patricia came in, having changed into an evening frock, despite what Mary Philip had said.

"Hallo, Mother, haven't you changed yet? Miss Philip said you were in this room after all: so I came."

"I have been busy," said Mrs. Moggridge. "I don't think I shall change to-night."

"Oh, but you must, Mother. You look awful."

"Really, Patricia . . ."

"But you do, Mother."

"Very well, Patricia. If I do, I do. Will you kindly take Gurth with you, and leave me to do what I think right."

"O.K.," said Patricia. "If that's how you feel." She turned to Gurth. "Come along, you little beast."

Gurth followed her out of the room, merely answering "Beast yourself. I'll pull your hair if you call me names."

Patricia was unmoved. "If you do," she said, when they were outside the room, "I shall tickle you till it really hurts."

Gurth knew she meant it, and fled downstairs. Some time afterward Patricia followed him. As she went down, the gong sounded for the second time. There was a scurry in the hall, as the visitors crowded into the dining-room with hungry looks.

4

INCURSION AT DINNER

MARTHA MUDGE was a person of uncertain temper and generally misanthropic opinions; but she could cook. Despite the inefficiency of the domestic arrangements at Excalibur House, the food was usually good, within the limits set by war-time scarcity of supplies. Dr. Sambourne, indifferent to most of life's creature comforts, liked good food and drink; and Mrs. Mudge had a pride in her art, though she took no interest in seeing that the house was kept clean or tidy. It was something of a problem to provide for the entertainment of such a galaxy of appetites as Dr. Sambourne's charity had gathered together; for the refugees dithered almost as much about food as about everything else that is capable of dividing man from man. But Mrs. Mudge managed well in this respect, as far as opportunity allowed.

On this particular evening, they sat down thirteen to table, as Dr. Franck had not yet arrived. An excellent vegetable soup was disposed of with a fine variety of orchestration. Dr. Meyerbeer provided a loud sucking sound by way of accompaniment to a higher, more intermittent note from Dr. Glück; and Gurth Moggridge joined in with an occasional deep resounding belch.

To the soup succeeded a chicken fricassee, to which the company did excellent justice. No wine was served at Dr. Sambourne's table, because the supplies were running short; but there was beer for those who liked it, and Dr. Sambourne, Dr. Meyerbeer, and Dr. Eva Glück, as well as George Potts, were of the number who did. Oman and Dr. Aronson, on the other hand, were teetotallers; and Dr. Rossini and de Wauters, though they liked wine, were unable to stomach English bitter beer. These, and the rest of the company, drank water.

Dr. Sambourne, at the head of the table, had his sister on his right and Potts on his left. Oman, at the other end, had Patricia Moggridge on his right, and an empty chair, destined

for Dr. Franck, on his left. Mrs. Moggridge had Gurth beside her, with Miss Philip next to him, then Rossini, and then Dr. Meyerbeer next to Franck's empty seat. On the opposite side, Dr. Glück was between George Potts and Professor de Wauters, who had Frau Meyerbeer on his left. Between Frau Meyerbeer and Patricia was Dr. Aronson, eating steadily, with his head down close to his plate.

Dr. Sambourne was entertaining his guests. "I was reading just now," he said, "an article on the City page of *The Times*, in which an eloquent tribute was paid to Mr. Montagu Norman. Now, I think we may take it as axiomatic that Mr. Norman is the source of most of our troubles. I have repeatedly demonstrated that, under the existing unsound system of finance, it is utterly impossible for the consuming public to be in possession of a sufficient quantity of purchasing power to make it possible for them to buy all the goods currently offered for sale. This being so, depression follows as a matter of course. The bankers, however . . ."

"Dat is not correct," said Dr. Meyerbeer. "In accordance with *de théorie des débouchées* . . ."

"Which is the hoariest of all fallacies," retorted Dr. Sambourne.

"Pardon me," said Dr. Meyerbeer. "You will hardly deny dat dere is a necessary correspondence of de prices vich arise in de course of production and de incomes vich are also generated in dat process."

"I deny it totally," Dr. Sambourne retorted. "My *A plus B* theorem . . ."

"Percy," interrupted Mrs. Moggridge, "if you think it good manners to hold forth at dinner on subjects in which no one can possibly be interested, permit me to tell you . . ."

"But," said Dr. Glück earnestly, "my dear Mrs. Moggridge, allow me to azzure you dere is no such ting possible as an uninteresting subject. De true student of human psychology . . ."

"The most uninteresting subject of all," George Potts put in. "Percy knows I think his opinions about money are the most god-forsaken rubbish, but I prefer them any day to the tommey-rot people call Psychology."

"I think," said Professor de Wauters, "the interest of a subject depends very greatly on the intelligence with which it is discussed. Art criticism, for example . . ."

"Is a most unsuitable subject for an assembly of Philistines as you called us only the other day," said David Oman.

Dr. Sambourne resumed command of the conversation. He proceeded, not for the first time, to expand in detail his beloved "A plus B" theorem, by which he proved conclusively that the world stood condemned to perpetual depression until it made an end of the bankers and issued money on a totally new principle, which would apparently make everybody as rich as could be, and more than double production without coasting a single ounce of additional human effort. His voice boomed on; and those who attempted to interrupt him were swept remorselessly aside. At last he paused; and George Potts said audibly, "ZOOKS!"

At this point there was a diversion. The front-door bell rang very loudly, and Mudge went out to answer it. Soon came a sound of uplifted voices from the hall, and Mrs. Moggridge, after a startled exclamation, rose from her seat and hurried out, shutting the door behind her. During the brief period for which it remained open, a loud voice was heard saying, "Mosh importan' business. Mush see Dr.—hic—Sambourne."

Gurth Moggridge gave a cry. "That's Father. He's drunk." He too got up, and rushed out into the hall. There was an awed silence round the table. The guests looked one at another, not quite knowing what to do. Dr. Sambourne called down the table to David Oman to go and find out what was the matter.

But at that moment the door opened again, and a very small, exceedingly cheerful man, with a hat tilted well back on his head and an open, flapping overcoat, darted into the room, closely pursued by Mrs. Moggridge, and came to a halt near Dr. Sambourne's chair, where he stood, swaying unsteadily.

"Evening, Percy. Tol' Mudge must shoo you, mosh importan' business. Stupid fellow, Mudge. Didn' expect to ind Queenie—pleasan' s'prise. Or Gurth—on'y b'loved son in' all that." His gaze swept round the table. "What? P'tricia too. Never rains but it pours. Pleash t'meet you all. Always room for a little one like me." He laughed heartily at his own wit.

"What the devil do you want here, Rowland?" said Dr. Sambourne, who had risen from his seat, and stood eyeing his unwelcome newcomer.

"Wan t' talk to you. Mosh importan' bu lown purpose," said Rowland Moggridge. "M private. Not here."

"Rowland!" said Mrs. Moggridge. "Do you realise you are drunk?"

"Not drunk," replied her husband: "on'y peckish. Jolly kind keep me place." He staggered along the table, and sat down in the empty seat which had been reserved for Dr. Franck.

"I didn't tell him to come," said Mrs. Moggridge agitatedly. "It is none of my doing. I had no idea . . ."

"Tha's right," Mr. Moggridge nodded approvingly. "Thash all ri', Queenie. Came on me own. Nice fella gave me a lift. So here I am." He beamed cheerfully upon the assembled company.

"You know how the drink always disagrees with him," said Mrs. Moggridge. "Oh, Percy! You must help me get him upstairs to bed."

Mr. Moggridge shook his head decidedly. "Not goin' bed yet," he said. "Want nice dinner." He paused, and then added, "And a nice drink—to settle things. Somebody gi' me a nice drink."

David Oman, standing beside him, poured out a glass of water, which Moggridge took and gulped down at a draught. He set the glass down unsteadily. "Goo' stuff, water, when you've drunk enough to make you thirsty. More, please."

Oman refilled the glass, and Moggridge drained it again. It seemed to have an excellent effect on him. He smiled across the table at his daughter, who was immediately opposite.

"Hallo, Pat, how's doings?"

"Lousy," said Patricia shortly.

"Sorry t'hear that. What I always say is, look on the bright side. Never could get your mother look on the bright side. Nor Lords of the Treasury, either. When I was in the Shivil Shervish . . ."

"Be quiet, Rowland," said Mrs. Moggridge. She turned to her brother. "I suppose the only thing is to let him have some dinner. He may be better when he has eaten something."

"Losh better," said her husband cheerfully. "Good stuff, food. Got coupons somewhere, if I haven't losht 'em."

"Mudge," said Dr. Sambourne. "Feed the brute."

"'Oor you calling a brute, Percy?" said Mr. Moggridge. He saw Potts for the first time. "Hallo, there's George again. Thought George'd gone away. Quite a fam'ly party. 'Oor all these other people, George? Done know 'em. Done know

any of 'em. Introjuice me. Why didn't you tell me there was a party, George?"

"This, ladies and gentlemen," said Dr. Sambourne, "is my esteemed brother-in-law, Mr. Rowland Moggridge, formerly of his Majesty's Home Office, and now of nowhere in particular." He turned to Mrs. Moggridge. "I thought you told me, Queenie, he was in a home, having another cure."

"So he was," said Mrs. Moggridge. "But he must have got loose somehow."

"Left hotel I was stopping at. Too damn' 'ficious and didn't like grub," said Mr. Moggridge. "Came straight to see Percy—mosht 'portant business—strictly private. Not say what about. Too many strangers, eh, George? Ought to be introjuiced."

"You came to borrow money, I suppose," said Dr. Sambourne.

"Don't put it like that, ol' chap. Came to put you on to a good thing. Like to do you good turn, 'cause you've always been kind to me. Not like Queenie. Queenie mosh unkind. Queenie doesn't love me. Want to be loved."

At this point Mr. Moggridge, his cheerfulness having evaporated, seemed likely to burst into tears. But Mudge, who had been absent from the room, now reappeared and set before him a cup of strong black coffee. Moggridge looked at this doubtfully, and then took a draught, spilling some as he raised the cup to his lips. He sat the cup down with a grunt of approbation.

"Good stuff, coffee. Better'n water. But whisky better still," he said. Then he added, "P'raps not now. P'raps had enough. Whisky later. All good friends here. Drink health." He pledged the assembled company in the steaming coffee, and then coughed violently.

"Mudge," said Dr. Sambourne. "Dinner will now proceed. Sit down, everybody. As I was saying, the only sound principle of banking is to base the amount of currency on the needs of the consumers, and not as is done to-day, on . . ."

Dinner proceeded, to the accompaniment of a lecture by Dr. Sambourne, subject to sundry interruptions. Moggridge, from the moment of drinking the coffee, had lost all his hilarity and relapsed into silence. He made an effort to eat, and renewed his potations of the coffee. But he seemed to be growing drowsy, and at length in the middle of one of Dr. Sambourne's periods, he collapsed in his chair and sank,

breathing heavily, to the floor. Mrs. Moggridge rushed to his assistance; but Potts got to him first and, with Oman's assistance, replaced him on his chair, where they had to hold him, staring stupidly and breathing hard and unevenly.

"Put the disgusting object to bed at once," ordered Dr. Sambourne.

"But where?" cried Mrs. Moggridge.

"In his wife's room, of course," said Dr. Sambourne. "If my sister chooses to come and stay here when she has not been asked, she must put up with the consequences."

"But I can't sleep with him—in that state," cried Queenie Moggridge. "Really, Percy."

"I don't see where else we can put him," said Potts.

"Take him away," Dr. Sambourne repeated. "I will not have him here."

"I suppose we'd better," said Oman doubtfully.

"Come on," Potts said. "You and I can manage him."

Together they contrived to get a grip of the by now nearly insensible figure of Rowland Moggridge, and bore it away out of the dining-room. Every one had risen from their seats, and the meal ended in confusion. Every one except Dr. Sambourne crowded into the hall. He banged the door behind them, sat down again at the head of the table, and poured himself out a glass of port.

III. FIRST ACT

I

DR. FRANCK ENCOUNTERS THE HOME GUARD

Tired but cheerful, Dr. Amadeus Franck strode on through the darkness. He had lost his way and had tramped several unnecessary miles in his quest for Excalibur House; for, whereas George Potts had told him to keep straight on for four miles, the road had shown a persistent tendency to fork in solitary places, and it had been impossible to tell what 'keeping straight on' really meant. But now at last he had been told by a cyclist who passed him in the darkness that it was only five minutes' walk down the road to the main entrance, which he would find on the left—a carriage drive among trees. With spirits renewed, Dr. Franck uplifted his voice and sang *The Wearing of the Green* with a strong German accent. A man appeared from nowhere, flashed a torch at him, laid a heavy hand on his arm, and inquired fiercely who he was. Dr. Franck, who was as powerful as he was tall, flung him off, and flashed a torch in his turn. He beheld an elderly gentleman with a bristling white moustache, clothed in the uniform of the Home Guard, and bearing a rifle.

"My name is Franck, and I am looking for a place called Excalibur House."

"You are a German? I shall have to arrest you."

"What for? I am an Austrian. My papers are in order. I do no harm. I am invited to stay with a Dr. Sambourne. You know of him, perhaps, yes?"

The Home Guard growled. "Yes, I know Dr. Sambourne. He brings bad characters into these parts. I think you are a spy. You are in league with the I.R.A."

"The I.R.A.? Please. I do not understand."

"Rebels. Irish. Why were you singing *The Wearing of the Green*?"

"Why not? It is a pretty song."

"It is a traitors' song. How do you come to know it?"

"I learned it from a friend. Is there harm in that?"

"Was he a member of the I.R.A.?"

"How do I know? He was half-Irish and half-German. I do not know about what you call the I.R.A."

"Where did you meet him?"

"In the Isle of Man. I have been interned there, till the Home Office has released me. I show you my papers."

"You come along with me to the Guard Room. We shall see about your papers there. I saw you signalling with your torch."

"I was not signalling. I was trying to find my way. I am a stranger here. Take me to Dr. Sambourne. He will explain for me."

The Home Guard, however, would not conduct his captive to any other place than the Post of the local Home Guard; and Dr. Franck, after some further argument, agreed to go quietly. They marched for half a mile back along the road by which he had come, and then, turning to the left, entered a village street. The Home Guard knocked at the door of a house, which was cautiously opened, and then shut behind them. Dr. Franck found himself, when the light was turned on, in a room furnished only with a rough table and some packing-cases, and in the presence of four men who had evidently been interrupted at a game of cards—for the cards were strewn on the table. The men were all in uniform. One of them, a dark, middle-aged man with a shaggy moustache said, "Well, Colonel, what have you got here?"

"A German," the captor answered, "and a very suspicious character. He says he is going to Excalibur House; but when I arrested him he was singing an Irish rebel song at the top of his voice. He may be a parachutist, signalling to his confederates. I think we ought to send for the Commandant."

"I'm in command here, for the time being," said the man with the shaggy moustache. He turned to Franck. "Well, what have you to say for yourself?"

Franck explained who he was, and produced his papers, which showed that he had been duly released from internment in the Isle of Man only a week before. The man in charge looked them over, and grunted.

"Hm! You claim to be a friend of Dr. Sambourne?"

"No. I have never met Dr. Sambourne. But I have been invited to stay in his house. I met this afternoon some persons who were also going there—at Middlebury Junction. They came by another train, and we met upon the station."

"Why did you separate from them, if you were all going to Dr. Sambourne's house?"

Franck explained that there had been no room for him

in the car, and that he had agreed to walk to Excalibur House, while Mr. Potts took charge of his luggage.

"Did you say Potts?" said one of the other men. "That'd be George Potts, who married old Sambourne's daughter. I know Potts. He's all right."

"There was also a lady named Mrs. Moggridge, with her two children," Franck went on. But apparently none of his interlocutors knew Mrs. Moggridge.

Franck was then questioned at length about his recent movements, and gave answers which advanced matters no further, as there was no means of checking them. He explained again that his singing *The Wearing of the Green* was a pure accident, said where he had learnt the song, and declared that he had no idea of it having any political significance. He stuck to it that he had never even heard of the I.R.A.

At length the man with the moustache said, "I must say, Colonel, this chap seems pretty all right to me. Besides, *The Wearing of the Green* isn't an I.R.A. song as I'm aware of. It's a thing any one might sing. I've often sung it myself, for no matter of that. What do you want us to do with him?"

The colonel, unwilling to be balked of his prey, suggested detention pending further inquiries.

"But, you know, we haven't got anywhere to detain him. And we'll only look like a pack of fools if he turns out to be K. I'm inclined to let him go."

The colonel protested strongly, and two of the others backed in on his side.

"Then I tell you what," said the leader. "You, Colonel, and Bob Ivens had better march him up to Excalibur House, and see if any one there can vouch for him. If they say he's K, you can leave him there. If not, bring him back here, and I'll get on to headquarters about him."

This solution, however, failed to secure sufficient support. The colonel, whose name was Kennell, said he had to go home, because his sister, who kept house for him, would be worried if he didn't report to her at 8.30, as he had promised to do. He said he would be back by half-past nine at latest; and then called Ivens also pleaded an engagement, but pledged himself to return to duty at the same time as the colonel. In spite of these objections, the leader of the party at length decided that Franck should be locked up in an adjoining room until Kennell and Ivens could return to take charge of him.

Accordingly Dr. Franck was kept locked up until after ten o'clock—for Kennell and Ivens were late in coming back—and

was then marched off under escort the way he had come. A little distance past the point at which he had encountered the colonel, the party turned into the drive of Excalibur House. As they approached the building, the front door was opened, and a stream of light poured out.

"Hi! You," the colonel shouted. "Put out that light at once."

The door was closed almost immediately. They heard the sound of someone running; and a figure dashed down the drive and ran right among them.

"Hold him!" cried Colonel Kennell; and Franck caught the flying figure in a firm grasp. The colonel flashed his torch, and Franck found himself looking at the frightened features of Master Gurth Moggridge.

Gurth kicked and struggled. "Let me go, you beast," he cried. But Franck held him tightly.

"Who are you," inquired the colonel, "and what do you mean by opening the door with the light full on in the hall?"

Gurth said nothing. He was too busy trying to kick his captor's shins.

"Here, listen to me," the colonel went on. "I asked you who you are."

Franck shook the boy. "My name's Moggridge," he said at length. "I was running away."

"Why? What made you run away?"

"It was Mr. Oman. He was hurting me."

"Why? What did he hurt you for?"

"He—he found me in the lab. He said I had no business to be there. He hit me, and I ran away, and he chased me. So I opened the front door, and ran into you."

The colonel again switched on his torch, and by its light Franck perceived that the boy was clutching something tightly in his hand. "What have you there?" he asked.

"Nothing," Gurth answered. "I mean, it's mine."

Franck wrested the object from him. It was a bottle. He asked the colonel to turn his torch on to it for a moment.

The torch flashed on; and Gurth seized the moment while Franck was examining the bottle to slip out of his grasp. He darted back up the drive, in the direction of the house. Franck did not pursue him. He was gazing at the bottle, of which he had seen by the light of the torch the inscription POT. CYANIDE.

The man called Bob Ivens had also seen it. "Ye Gods!" he exclaimed. "Cyanide of Potassium! Hi! Catch tha

boy." Leaving the other two, he started up the drive in pursuit.

"What's that? What's that?" exclaimed the colonel. "Why the devil did you let that boy escape? I believe you did it on purpose."

"I did not," Franck answered. "I was so astonished at what I saw on the bottle that I let go of him, and he was away it once. This bottle is labelled Potassium Cyanide."

"Good heavens! That's poison," said the colonel. "That's dangerous stuff. However did the boy get hold of a thing like that?"

"Perhaps we had better go to the house and inquire, and so return the bottle to its owner," Dr. Franck suggested.

At that moment Ivens returned, to report that he had failed to catch the fugitive. "I nearly had my hands on him once; but he slipped away somewhere in the dark," he said, and then added, "You saw what was in that blinking bottle—or what was on the label, anyway. Somebody ought to take large of that. Who's got it now?"

"I have it safe," Franck answered.

"Then you blooming well hand it over," said Ivens rudely. "How do I know what you'll be up to with stuff like that? Don't you forget, you're under arrest, you are."

Franck meekly handed the bottle to the colonel, who tucked away from him as if it might bite. "I'm damned if I like charge of the thing," said he.

"Here. Give it me," said Ivens; and Franck passed it over to him, repeating his proposal that they should go into the house at once.

The others agreed to this; and they proceeded to the now closed front door. The colonel, with the aid of his torch, found the bell, and gave it a good pull. They heard the clung inside the house. But once more the house was unresponsive. The colonel tugged again; and this time they could hear somebody coming. The door opened a crack, showing darkness within. A voice said, "Who iss there, please?"

"Open, in the King's name," roared Kennell. The door swung open, and the colonel flashed his torch in Professor Meyerbeer's frightened face. They stepped in, leaving Franck the doorway.

"Give us a light there," cried the colonel, waving his torch. Professor Meyerbeer obediently switched on the hall light, sending a bright beam out along the drive.

"Where is Dr. Sambourne?" the colonel inquired menacingly. "Fetch Dr. Sambourne at once."

Professor Meyerbeer obediently scuttled off, leaving the others in the hall. Franck shut the door behind them. Scarcely had he gone when a door at the back of the hall opened, and Dr. Rossini appeared, wearing a hat and overcoat. The sight of the two men in uniform appeared to agitate him; for he first made as if to retreat hastily the way he had come, and then, thinking better of it, put on something of a swagger, and advanced towards them.

"Here, you," said the colonel, "do you know where Dr. Sambourne is?"

"I am sorry. I do not know. In his laboratory, it is possible. You have inquired for him?"

"Yes, I have. Have you seen a boy anywhere about?"

"A boy? You mean the son of Mrs. Moggridge? I do not know where he is since dinner."

"Were you just going out?"

"No. I came back from a little stroll I have taken—in the garden. I hope there is nothing wrong."

"You're a foreigner, aren't you? You've got no right to be out at this time of night," said Colonel Kennell truculently.

"Pardon; but I only walk myself in the garden."

"Well, never mind that now," said Kennell. "What I want to know is, do you know this man?" The colonel pointed at Dr. Franck.

Rossini surveyed him. "I 'ave not the pleasure," he said.

"My name is Franck. Dr. Sambourne expects me. Perhaps he has spoken of me to you—if you live here."

Rossini went up to Franck, and shook his hand warmly. "I am delight to meet you. Ve had 'oped you would have been with us for dinner. The place was laid; but you comed not. I am Dr. Rossini. Shall I show you your room? And we must find Mr. Oman or Miss Philip, if we can so. You have eaten perhaps?"

Franck, who was feeling very hungry, said that he had no eaten. Rossini's face fell. "Then we must of a certainty find Mr. Oman or Miss Philip; for the servants will take no notice of what I do tell them. Dis is a vairy strange 'ouse, as you wi vairy soon discover, if you are come to stay. But now I wi see if Miss Philip is in her room." He took off his coat and ha hung them up, and went away by the door at the back b which he had entered the hall.

Meanwhile the colonel's patience was giving out. He flung open the door of the dining room on the left, to find the room apparently untenanted and in darkness. Then he tried the rary door on the opposite side of the hall. This room was up, and a hot frowst came out into the hall. The colonel rode into the room.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said, "but I am looking for meone who has any authority in this house."

The library was occupied by two persons, Frau Meyerbeer and Dr. Eva Glück. Frau Meyerbeer looked up at the colonel's words, shook her head, and went on with her knitting. Dr. Glück came forward. She caught sight of Dr. Frank's tall figure from behind the colonel's.

"Amadeus!"

"Eva!"

"What are you doing here?" Dr. Glück asked, with dent agitation.

Behind the colonel's back, Frank was making faces at her. seemed that he was trying to convey something he could not into words.

He said, "Dr. Sambourne has been so good as to invite me reside here. But I had no idea of meeting you, Eva. I pose, when you heard that a Dr. Frank was expected, had no expectation of seeing me. Frank is so common ame."

"None at all," said Dr. Glück promptly. "I did not know, i, dat you were in England."

"You are acquainted with this gentleman?" the colonel iired.

"Oh yes. I know Dr. . . . Frank vary well. We are friends. Is it not so, Amadeus?"

"Was it abroad you knew him?"

"Oh yes. It was in . . . Wien—Vienna. My so beautiful i, vich I live in de hope dat I may see again." As she lioned Vienna, she gave a look at Frank, as if to see her she was taking her cue aright. Frank nodded. "My e is Glück—Dr. Eva Glück. I am a psychiatrist. Dat iss, nd de broken souls."

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"None at all," said Dr. Glück promptly. "I did not know, even, that you were in England."

"You are acquainted with this gentleman?" the colonel inquired.

"Oh yes. I know Dr. . . . Franck very well. We are old friends. Is it not so, Amadeus?"

"Was it abroad you knew him?"

"Oh yes. It was in . . . Wien—Vienna. My so beautiful Wien, vich I live in de hope dat I may see again." As she mentioned Vienna, she gave a look at Franck, as if to see whether she was taking her cue aright. Franck nodded. "My name is Glück—Dr. Eva Glück. I am a psychiatrist. Dat iss, I mend de broken souls."

The colonel seemed puzzled. "I can't really take your word for him," he said. "Isn't there some respectable English person who can vouch for him?"

Dr. Glück wagged her head. "Ach, we poor foreigners in a strange land, you do not counter us as respectable. It is natural—yes, I see dat. Xenophobia is vairy de

'uman mind. Eet is a deep, animal impulse. Ach, vat animals ve humans are, under all de veneer."

The colonel was at a loss. "I have no idea what you're talking about," he said. "As you know Dr. Franck, I suppose he had better stop here with you while I find someone myself who can vouch for him. Ivens, you stop with these people, while I hunt this accursed house for somebody with a grain of sense."

Ivens nodded, and Colonel Kennell hustled off. Dr. Glück suggested that they should sit down, and Ivens cautiously took a seat near the door. Franck flung himself into an arm-chair, and said, "Well, Eva? This is a strange meeting. Have you been in England long? I suppose we had better speak English, or our guardian will suppose we are saying something naughty."

"I have been here almost two years now. Before that, I was in Paris. And you?"

"In Holland. I escaped in a rowing-boat after the Germans marched in, and I was arrested and interned here as soon as I landed." He shrugged his shoulders. "After that, I was in the Isle of Man up to a few days ago."

"You have suffered?" Eva Glück inquired. "My poor Amadeus!"

"Have not all of us? Have not you?"

"It is inconvenient," said Dr. Glück. "No one does like to be made an exile, or to be forced to leave de vork dat vos so interesting and good. But, beyond dat, I have not suffered greatly. No. I 'ave been of de more fortunate. But you, Amadeus, are you still unmarried, or . . ."

Franck smiled. He said, "Yes, and you? I gather you keep your maiden name."

"Fritz and I have parted," said Dr. Glück. "He 'as become a Nazi."

"It does not surprise me," Franck answered. "You know I told you you were making a mistake when you agreed to marry him."

"So. I admit it," said Dr. Glück. "But we will speak not of that. You look very well, Amadeus."

"I am well. Conditions in the Isle of Man were bad at first, but they improved. The only thing that afflicts me now is hunger." He grinned.

"My poor Amadeus! You have had no dinner?"

"A fellow called Rossini said just now he would try and find someone and tell them."

"Pah! Dr. Rossini will do nothing. I . . . I will brave for you the so redoubtable Mrs. Mudge. You know not yet heroism I display for your sake! Mrs. Mudge loves not that we exiles invade her kitchen. But I will provide something, if I have to combat her for it vit dese lands of mine." She got up from her seat, and went towards the door.

"I say! Here!" said Ivens.

"Please?"

"I'm not sure if I ought to let you go out of this room without the colonel's leave. He told me to stop here and keep an eye on you." Ivens moved towards the door.

"Do not be so stupid," Dr. Gluck retorted. "I go to find the food for Dr. Franck."

Ivens stood stolidly in front of the door. Dr. Gluck went menacingly towards him. "You vill kindly get yourself out of my way," she said fiercely.

"I shall not," said Ivens stolidly.

"But I sink you vill," said Dr. Gluck. She gave him a sudden push, which sent him staggering, and was out of the door before he had recovered from his astonishment.

"I say," said Ivens helplessly. "This won't do, you know."

Franck laughed. "In my experience," he said, "it is best to let Eva Gluck have her way at once. She gets it always."

Ivens said, crestfallen, "Well, the colonel didn't actually say she was to stop here. So maybe it's all right. But don't you be up to any of your tricks, or you won't get away so easy." He looked up at Franck from his greatly inferior height, as David may have looked at Goliath.

"Thank you. I am very comfortable here," Franck answered, resuming his seat. He addressed Frau Meyerbeer, who had continued to knit silently throughout the foregoing scene. "You reside here, madam?"

Frau Meyerbeer said nothing, but gravely inclined her head.

"You are from Austria, perhaps, too?"

"No. I am from Berlin. Dr. Meyerbeer has been Professor at the University."

"You are in England long?"

"Since 1937. Ve 'ave lost everything."

"Have you, too, been interned?"

"No. Dr. Meyerbeer resides in England—in London, till ve 'ave come 'ere—since the war began. Ve 'ave been in England vairy long."

"I, too, am of the University," said Dr. Franck. "Or rather I was till I had to leave after the troubles in Vienna. I am a Social Democrat. I remember a Dr. Meyerbeer who used to belong to the *Neu Beginnenden* group. Is that your husband?"

She shook her head decidedly. "No, it is not so. Dr. Meyerbeer 'as taken no part in politics—ever. He is a great scholar."

"Ah! Then he is not a political refugee. I suppose he is Jewish."

Frau Meyerbeer's meekness fell from her. "We are both Aryan," she said proudly. "It is a wicked lie that Johann has had a Jewish grandmother."

"Why should not he have?" Franck answered. "I am half Jewish myself."

"Dr. Meyerbeer and I are of the purest German blood," said Frau Meyerbeer coldly. "We are of the Prussian aristocracy. We have had great misfortunes; but that consolation does remain to us. We are not Jews, or criminals."

Ivens intervened. "I didn't quite catch what you were saying. Were you saying your husband is a Nazi?"

Frau Meyerbeer uttered a horrified exclamation. "No, no. Ze Nazis zey are terrible persons. Zey are vicked revolutionaries who 'ave confounded ze classes. Dr. Meyerbeer 'as 'ad no politics. He is a partisan of the old times."

"It all sounds a bit fishy to me," said Ivens.

The door opened, and a crowd of persons poured into the room. First came Dr. Glück, bearing a tray of eatables. She was followed by Colonel Kennell, David Oman, Mary Philip, Dr. Rossini, Dr. Meyerbeer, George Potts, and Mrs. Moggridge. Behind them Mudge could be seen, hovering in the hall. Dr. Glück went straight to Franck, and set down the tray on a table beside him; and he, with a word of thanks, set to work at once with a hearty appetite, looking up from time to time as he listened to the ensuing dialogue.

The colonel was saying, "The boy ran full into us, Mr Oman, and we collared him, and then we found he was carrying a bottle of dangerous poison. And then there was a slip-up and he got away, and we brought our other prisoner for you to identify. That is the man." He pointed dramatically at Franck. "Do you know him?"

"I never saw him before," said Oman. "But, as I told you, Dr. Sambourne was expecting an Austrian refugee

named Franck this evening. I believe Mr. Potts knows him by sight."

George Potts came forward. "Yes, this is the man I met at the station. Good evening, Dr. Franck. Mrs. Moggridge can speak for him too. Can't you, Queenie?"

Mrs. Moggridge said, "I can tell Colonel Kennell that this is the man we met at Middlebury this afternoon. I know no more about him, except that he helped with the luggage."

Potts said, "You see, Kennell, the fellow's quite all right. You've no call to trouble your head about him any more. Of course, you were quite right to be careful; but you've done your duty. We'll look after him now. The more the merrier. That's the motto up here at Excalibur House. You just get back to your job, so as we can all feel safe in our beds, and don't bother about anything else."

Kennell looked doubtful. "I don't quite know . . ." he began.

Queenie Moggridge broke in. "Oh, Colonel Kennell must not leave us yet," she cried. "You are forgetting, George. We must search the house for my poor boy. I feel sure something dreadful has happened to him."

"What I cannot make out," said Mary Philip, "is what can have become of Dr. Sambourne. It is most unlike him to go out at this time of night. He almost always spends the evening either in his study or in the laboratory; and he isn't either of them, because I have looked. And he isn't in his bedroom either, because the door is wide open, and I looked in, and there was nobody there. Of course, I don't mean there is anything to get anxious about, but . . ."

"It is Gurth who must be found," cried Queenie Moggridge. "The poor boy is so delicate. I am sure he will be sadly ill if he is allowed to roam about when he ought to be in bed."

"What Gurth needs," said Potts decidedly, "is the hiding of his life. I shall enjoy giving it him myself, as soon as he can be found."

"You will do nothing of the sort," Queenie Moggridge retorted. "Gurth is so highly strung that he might *die* if he were unkindly treated."

"Bosh!" said Potts. "He stole the cyanide, didn't he? He broke into the laboratory, and stole it."

"He didn't steal it," Queenie answered. "Gurth is much more of a gentleman ever to steal anything. If you mean that he ought not to have gone into the laboratory without

permission, of course I agree. But I will not have my son accused of stealing."

"I expect somebody left the laboratory door unlocked," Mary Philip put in. "Dr. Sambourne does, you know, though he doesn't like to be told so. And I'm sure, Mrs. Moggridge, your son did not really mean to *steal* anything."

"That is very possible," said Oman. "I am afraid Dr. Sambourne does very often fail to lock the door when he thinks he has. But that doesn't tell us where he can have got to. It is so unlike his usual habits, to be out now. I can't think where he can have gone. The last I saw of him was when he left the laboratory at about half-past nine, and said he was going to his study. Has anybody seen him since then?"

Potts said, "Yes, I saw him in the study for a minute or two, round about ten o'clock. He was all right then; and he didn't say anything about going out."

"I suppose he must have, all the same," said Colonel Kennell. "Probably strolled down to the village to see someone. I don't see that there's anything to worry about; and I ought to be getting home myself pretty soon."

"It is really most unlike him," Mary Philip persisted. "He never goes out at night, and . . ."

"At any rate," said Kennell, "Dr. Sambourne appears to have left the door of his laboratory open, most likely, so that this pest of a boy was able to break in and steal the cyanide."

"I will not have such things said of my son," said Mrs. Moggridge. "I am sure Gurth is quite incapable of any dishonourable action."

"Well, ma'am, you must admit we caught the boy with the bottle actually in his hand," said Colonel Kennell. "But we will not call it stealing, if you don't like the word. I know as well as you do that boys will be boys, and we've all been young once."

Queenie Moggridge was mollified. She smiled at Kennell. "Just so," she said. "Of course it was all a prank, Colonel. But you must help us to find my poor son. He was so ill to-day, and I am terrified when I think he may be hiding from you in some terrible cold place."

"He'll turn up," said Potts. "Nothing the matter with him, except a tummy-ache, at most. I can't see what you're all fussing about."

"I am fussing, as you call it, about Dr. Sambourne," said Mary Philip. "You see, I know his habits."

"I do really think," Oman put in, "we ought to try and find him. Where did you look, Miss Philip?"

"I hunted most of the house," said Mary; "and he didn't seem to be anywhere. Of course, I couldn't get into quite all the rooms. Some of them are locked."

"Which rooms were locked?" Oman inquired.

"Professor de Wauters's was; but he said through the door he was alone, and was going to bed. So was Dr. Glück's; there didn't seem to be anybody there."

"I have locked my room," said Dr. Glück, "because no person has been removing my blankets."

"I did that," said Mary. "You had such a lot, and I had to give some with all these new arrivals." She went on to say, "I didn't go into Mrs. Moggridge's room, or knock at it. But I could hear Mr. Moggridge snoring through the door. I did knock at Miss Moggridge's door, and she came and told me what I wanted. I think I looked inside all the other rooms that are in use, except Mr. Oman's, which was locked, like Signor Rossini's. He came out just as I was going to go; so I didn't need to."

"Then the fact is that my brother has disappeared," said Mrs. Moggridge. "And my son cannot be found. I insist on the house being thoroughly searched again immediately. Did Philip go into the basement, or up to the attics?"

"No, I didn't, because Mudge said Mrs. Mudge was in the kitchen, and there was no one else down there. And the attics haven't been used for ages, so I knew it would be no good going up there."

"The whole house must be searched from floor to ceiling," Mrs. Moggridge repeated. "With all these foreigners about, something terrible may easily have happened."

"In view of what has been said, I agree with you, madam," said the colonel. "We must organise a proper search party. If Mr. Potts will please stay here, and see that nobody leaves the room, and Mr. Oman will come with me."

"Mr. Ivens, we will soon find any body that has been concealed."

"Body!" exclaimed Mrs. Moggridge. "Are you suggesting that Gurth has been murdered?"

"As to that, madam," said the colonel stiffly, "I express no opinion. Or as to Dr. Sambourne. But, with all these persons about, one cannot be too careful. I have always respected Dr. Sambourne's misguided ideas of hospitality."

"You are a ver' rude man," Dr. Glück exclaimed excitedly,

"and if you say we have touched one bit of Dr. Sambourne's head, you are one bloody liar."

"Madam!" said Colonel Kennell, scandalized.

"What she say is true," cried Dr. Kennell. "You make yourself very rude, sir. I snap my fingers at you. So!" He suited the action to the word. There was a confused babel of tongues.

Dr. Franck rose from his seat, towering over them all. He made full use of his enormous voice. He cried, "Silence!" and a hush fell. Everybody stood staring at him, except Frau Meyerbeer, who went on knitting undisturbed.

"Well, sir?" said Colonel Kennell, bawling at Franck.

"You are all behaving foolishly," said Franck. "These matters should be attended to in proper order. Who of you last has seen Dr. Sambourne, and where? That is, after Mr. Potts did see him in his study, as he has said."

There was a short silence. Then Oman said, "I went across to the laboratory with him after dinner. I left him there about half-past nine. I have not seen him since."

Potts spoke. "I told you I was with him after that—in his study, just after ten. I was with him only a few minutes."

"You left him in the study?"

"Yes. That's the last I have seen of him."

"Who has seen him after that?"

Nobody answered.

"The study was empty when I looked there," said Mary Philip. "That was a few minutes ago."

Franck looked at his wrist-watch. "It is now a quarter-past eleven," he said. "Colonel Kennell and I arrived here at about half-past ten. Is it certain that none of us saw Dr. Sambourne after Mr. Potts left him?"

"One of the others may have. We aren't all here," said Oman.

"Who are absent?" Dr. Franck appeared to have taken charge by an exercise of natural authority.

Oman said, "Besides Dr. Sambourne and young Moggridge, the persons not here are Mr. Moggridge, Miss Moggridge, Dr. Aronson, and Professor de Wauters. And the Mudge. But I saw Mudge just now."

"He was with us in the hall, but he didn't come in," said Potts. "I can account for some of the missing ones, I think. I helped Mr. Oman to put Mr. Moggridge to bed immediately after dinner, and I saw Patricia then, and she said she was going to bed herself."

FIRST ACT

Mary Philip put in, "Professor de Wauters went to his own room at once after dinner. He usually does."

"What about Aronson?" Potts asked. But Mary appeared to have seen Dr. Aronson since dinner-time.

"You looked in his room?" Franck asked of Mary.

"Yes; but he wasn't there."

"Then Dr. Aronson seems to have vanished too," Potts said. "Quite a party of them. Can they have gone for a walk?"

Mary shivered. "On a night like this? I am sure not. It is the last thing any of them would do."

"I suppose Dr. Sambourne has not returned to his laboratory, Mr. Oman." It was Dr. Glück who spoke.

"The place was dark when I looked in just now."

"Then it is time to search the house," said Franck. "You, Colonel, and your companion shall investigate the basement."

"Well, I like that," said Kennell. "Are you giving orders? Remember you're under arrest, my man."

"Mr. Oman and Mr. Potts had better return to their laboratory, and make sure that all is well there," Franck continued, unperturbed by Colonel Kennell's protest. "Rossini and Dr. Meyerbeer can search this floor, Mrs. McGlück and Miss Philip can take the bedrooms, while Dr. Glück and I proceed to the attic."

"Of all the blooming cheek," said Ivens.

"Pardon. Does any one know to suggest a better arrangement?"

"Lock 'em all up here, Colonel, except you and me," said Ivens. "I don't trust any of 'em. That one"—he pointed to Dr. Glück—"did the dirty on me while you were out of the room."

"Are you proposing to lock me up, young man?" asked Queenie Moggridge.

"No offence meant, ma'am," said Ivens. "except to the air all round."

"Then please understand that I refuse to be locked up in my brother's house. In his absence, I consider myself in charge."

"I am in charge, madam," protested Colonel Kennell. "The Home Guard is entitled to search premises for suspected persons."

"That is exactly what I want you to do. I suggest that you lock all the aliens in this room, while we English search."

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The colonel bowed. "An excellent notion, madam." He went to the door and threw it open. "Will you please lead the way?" He paused. "But, by Jove, there's no key in this lock. That's a bit of a difficulty."

"I am sure," said Mary Philip, "all our foreign visitor will agree to remain here while the search proceeds, if you think that the best thing to do."

"As long as that is agreed," said the colonel doubtfully.

"Of course it is," said Mary.

"You mark my words," said Mrs. Moggridge. "They be all over the house as soon as our backs are turned."

"Get on with you, Queenie," said Potts, who was standing by the door. "Do stop badgering the poor creatures. They have done you no harm."

"Mind your own business, George," said Mrs. Moggridge. She swept out of the room, and the others followed her, Potts bringing up the rear and shutting the door behind them.

In the hall the all-British party held a brief consultation. It was first proposed that they should begin by searching the upper floors, and most of the party actually mounted to the first landing, whence they continued to argue with Colonel Kennell, who was half-way up the stairs, and insisted that the search ought to begin with the ground floor and the basement. There was a proposal that they should split into two parties, one to take the upper floors and the other the ground floor and the basement. But Kennell and Mrs. Moggridge united to oppose this, and urged strongly that the whole party should keep together, though Queenie was insistent on beginning with the bedrooms and attics as the colonel was on beginning with the lower part of the house.

During this altercation, which ended in Kennell getting his way through sheer obstinacy, one or two members of the party, including Potts and Oman, had ascended to the second floor. But they were recalled by Kennell, who sent Ivens to fetch them back; and at last the whole party set out upon its search, descending first to the basement, where it caused great annoyance to the Mudgetts, but discovered nothing, then returning to the ground floor, and turning, under Kennell's leadership, in the direction of Dr. Sambour's laboratory.

DR. GLÜCK TO THE RESCUE

THEY found Dr. Sambourne in a small bedroom leading off his laboratory, where he sometimes slept when he was occupied with his experiments. He was lying on the floor beyond the bed, off which he appeared to have rolled. He was insensible, and breathing heavily, but not stertorously. Oman and George Potts bent over him, while Colonel Kennell restrained Mrs. Moggridge's apparent desire to fling herself upon the body.

Oman said in a half whisper, "I'm nearly sure he has been poisoned. What do you say?"

Potts agreed. "We'd better get him back on the bed. Any notion what it is? You're a chemist, aren't you?"

"I know damn all about the effect of poisons," Oman answered. "But I should say it was laudanum, or something of that sort. There was plenty about in the laboratory; but the Lord knows how he can have come to swallow it."

Between them, they lifted Dr. Sambourne on to the bed. "Is any of these people here a doctor?" Kennell asked.

"Not the sort you mean," Oman answered. "Doctors of Philosophy—lots of 'em. Dr. Glück's the nearest thing to a medico, and her line's psychology. I reckon we'd better send for Dr. Yorick. Shall I go and phone?"

"I will go," said Mary Philip. "And I'll send Dr. Glück, in case she can be of any use until he comes. Even a few minutes may make all the difference, may it not?"

"So I believe," said Potts. "You cut off and send in the Glück female, and get a real doctor as quick as you can. I wish I knew what one ought to do; but I'm afraid of making matters worse. I should say we had better leave him alone until the doctor comes. What do you say, Oman?"

"I suppose a strong emetic is the right thing," said Oman doubtfully. "But a stomach pump must be what is really wanted. One has no idea how much he has taken—it is opium—or how long ago. I wish I didn't feel so helpless; but I suppose I really agree that we had better wait for the doctor, at any rate if he is at home. He lives quite near here."

At this point Mrs. Moggridge burst out into loud complaint. She accused them of leaving her brother to die, instead of doing something at once.

Dr. Glück came running into the laboratory, accompanied by Franck. Guided by their voices, she ran into the bedroom, and the others made way for her to approach the bed. Franck followed, and stood beside her. She felt Dr. Sambourne's skin, and then opened his eyes and looked intently at the pupils. "It is opium, beyond a doubt," she said. "Quick! I shall need many things. But the first thing is to awaken him, and he must not go to sleep. Dat is fatal. Amadens! Lift him to his feet, and shake him hard. Make him walk up and down. See! Strike him, shake him, do what you will, but make him wake and walk."

"I'll help," said Potts; and he and Franck between them began shaking and hitting the sleeping doctor. Dr. Glück said to Oman, "Apomorphine! You have some? I shall need it. And caffein and atropine. And there must be much hot coffee. At once. Mrs. Moggridge, you shall go find coffee instantly. Alas! that I have not a stomach pump. There is no stomach pump, eh, Mr. Oman?"

Oman shook his head.

"Then go fetch the things I have told you. At once. And I say to you all there is no time to be lost. Be gone with you, Mrs. Moggridge. This is no time for lamentations. We must be useful, yes, and quick."

Queenie Moggridge, for once in her life, obeyed without argument. She hurried off in the direction of the kitchen while Oman went to the laboratory in search of the requisite drugs.

"You have a hypodermic syringe?" Dr. Glück cried hurrying after him. "I shall need her."

"No, but Meyerbeer has. He's diabetic."

"Someone shall go at once, and fetch Professor Meyerbeer's syringe," Dr. Glück commanded; and Colonel Kenné told Ivens to go.

Meanwhile, Franck and Potts had succeeded in waking Dr. Sambourne by repeated pommellings, and had got him to his feet and began to walk him up and down, in spite of his half-articulate protests. Dr. Sambourne was continual trying to sink down to the floor, and his eyes kept closing. His attendants pommelled him back to wakefulness whenever this happened; and they held him up and compelled him walk after a fashion.

Mary Philip came hurrying back. "Dr. Yorick says will come at once," she said. "Oh dear, what are you doing Dr. Sambourne?"

"It iss what is right," said Dr. Glück. "He must be kept walking, or dere is no hope. Oh, that de man may return quickly mit de syringe. Mr. Oman, you find the tings I ask for?"

Oman was out of hearing; but a minute or two later he came back, bearing several bottles and packets, and almost at the same time Frau Meyerbeer came running in with a hypodermic syringe.

It would be unpleasant to describe in detail the events of the next few minutes. Dr. Glück began operations with an injection of aponorphine, followed by one of atropine sulphate. She compelled the patient to swallow a large dose of caffen, and attempted without much success to make him drink a quantity of the hot coffee, which Mrs. Moggridge produced within a remarkably short time. The consequences of these decisive measures—as decisive as could be applied in the absence of either a stomach pump or a rectal syringe—were not pleasant to behold; nor was it easy to apply them in face of the patient's persistent desire to sleep. But when Dr. Yorick appeared on the scene and further measures became possible, he was warm in praise of the efficiency with which Dr. Glück had handled the situation.

"Will he recover, Doctor?" Mrs. Moggridge asked anxiously. But all Dr. Yorick would say was that, thanks to Dr. Glück's promptitude, the patient had a fighting chance.

Dr. Yorick, a grey-haired man with keen eyes and a sharp manner, proceeded to clear the room of unnecessary persons. He retained Franck and Potts and Frau Meyerbeer, in addition to Dr. Glück, but told the rest brusquely to betake themselves elsewhere. Colonel Kennell, as he withdrew, way of the laboratory, bethought himself to ask Oman, who was hovering there among the bottles, whether he could say positively that the bottle of cyanide had been stolen from there.

"Yes, the cyanide's gone," Oman answered. "You took us you got it back from that devil of a boy. What have you done with it?"

"Ivens had it. I suppose he has it now. Here, Ivens, have you got that bottle of cyanide?"

"Good lord! I forgot all about it. I put it down in the library."

"Then go and get it at once."

Ivens went off, and the colonel continued, "Ought to be

locked up, that stuff, oughtn't it? How did the boy come to be able to get at it?"

"I am afraid that was Dr. Sambourne's fault. I found the poison cupboard unlocked, as well as the laboratory itself. He is often very careless."

"Damned criminal stupidity, I call it," the colonel retorted. "One good thing is, it wasn't that stuff poisoned him, so Dr. Yorick says. Suppose he knows what he's talking about."

"No. It was laudanum. There is no doubt of that." Oman hunted in the poison cupboard, and then said, "The laudanum is here, all right, in its proper place. I can't imagine how he came to swallow it. It looks as if there's quite a dollop missing. I'll have to check up on that."

"You don't think he took it on purpose?"

"Good lord, no! Why should he? He'd no worries or troubles, and he thoroughly enjoyed life in his own peculiar way. It must have been an accident; but how—it beats me."

Ivens came back, looking very crestfallen. "The bottle's gone," he said. "I put it down on a shelf near the door, and someone's taken it. It's not there now."

"Infernal carelessness," said Colonel Kennell.

"Did you ask about it?" Oman inquired.

"No one to ask. There was nobody left in the library."

"It must be found," commanded Colonel Kennell. "It must be found at once. We must search the house. We must search everybody."

"I have been thinking," said Oman, "we ought perhaps to inform the police. Even if it was an accident . . ."

"No use telling Summers," observed the colonel. "He's a decent chap for a village policeman; but nothing up here." He tapped his forehead.

"No. I think we should ring up the main police station at Middlebury," said Oman. "Perhaps I had better consult Mr. Potts." He went into the bedroom, and asked Potts whether he thought the police should be sent for.

Potts, still at his arduous task of supporting Dr. Sambourne's tottering steps during the intervals of Dr. Yorick's ministrations, said, "Why the police? It was an accident surely. And it's not as if he were dead."

Oman mentioned the disappearance of the bottle of cyanide.

"Poh! The man put it down somewhere else, and forg where. Nothing in that. It'll turn up."

"All the same, Mr. Potts . . . Suppose this . . . wasn't an accident."

"Nonsense, man. It must have been. Nobody'd want to murder Percy."

"Still, Mr. Potts, I don't understand it. I'd feel happier . . ."

"Aren't we in for enough trouble already?" Potts began. He saw Oman's expression, and said, "Oh! very well. Have your own way. If you think you *know* something. . ."

"I don't know anything more than you do," Oman answered. "But I have a feeling . . ."

"All right. I said have it your own way. I'm busy. You tend to it." Potts's manner was brusque.

Oman went back to Colonel Kennell. "Mr. Potts doesn't seem to think there is any need to call in the police. But he's given me permission to act as I think fit. I feel we ought—especially now this poison has disappeared. What do you say? Shall I ring up or will you?"

"Oh, I'll ring 'em for you. I know the chief constable very well. He's a good fellow, Colonel Welsh. I'll see if I can't find him personally, and tell him all about it."

"I'd be awfully grateful if you would," said Oman. "The truth is, I'm a bit puzzled. I don't quite know what to do."

"About what, in particular?"

"Well." Oman hesitated. "I caught someone snooping about in here earlier to-day. Of course, it may have nothing to do with it."

"Who was it?" Colonel Kennell inquired.

"Dr. Aronson. He's one of Dr. Sambourne's refugees, and I always had my doubts about him."

"Isn't he the one who has disappeared?"

"Yes. At least, no one seems to have seen him since then."

"Well, I'll go and phone Welsh. And then I'm damned if I'm going to search this house till I find that bottle. Perhaps I'll find your missing Yid as well. I've always said it was a little bit of a scandal, the way Sambourne was allowed to fill up his house with a lot of suspicious characters who ought to be locked up. Now it looks as if he's paying for it. I'll tell the chief constable about this snooper of yours. What's his name, again?"

"Aronson."

"Right-o! Welsh'll know what to do. Do—"

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Oman. "But I am worried."

3

COLONEL WELSH'S NARROW SQUEAK

COLONEL KENNEL made the most of his story when he rang up Colonel Welsh. He was a very muddled narrator; and in the course of his narrative the poisoning of Dr. Sambourne, the highly suspicious conduct of Dr. Franck, the disappearance of the cyanide and of Dr. Aronson, and Oman's news about finding Aronson in the laboratory earlier in the day came out amid a welter of bewildering details. The effect of this form of narrative was to cause the Chief Constable of Brigshire to take the events at Excalibur House more seriously than he might have been disposed to do if Kennell had been a less excitable narrator; for he got a very definite impression that Dr. Sambourne had been deliberately poisoned, and a much vaguer one of a host of highly suspicious foreigners on the loose with bottles of cyanide, laudanum, and what not, with dangerous I.R.A. agents somewhere in the background.

Colonel Welsh, the explosive but cheerful Chief Constable of Brigshire, and his wife, Emily Welsh, are old friends of ours, and some of our readers may be acquainted with them already.¹ What is more to the point, they are old friends of a certain Superintendent Wilson, of Scotland Yard, of whom our readers may also have some knowledge. On this occasion, late as it was when Kennell rang up, the chief constable had not yet gone to bed. He was in the middle of a last rubber of bridge, in the course of which the lady who was his partner had been causing him well-nigh unbearable anguish by wildly reckless calling, followed by wildly misadventurous play. This state of affairs may have reinforced the enthusiasm with which, after hearing what Colonel Kennell had to say, he agreed, despite the lateness of the hour, to start immediately in person for Excalibur House—or rather, to set out as soon as he had got into touch with one of his inspectors, who would follow on as soon as possible with a subordinate police officer. In the meantime he said he was relying on Kennell to keep his

¹ See *Corpse in the Chief Constable's Garden* and *The End of an Ancient Mariner*.

eyes open, and to tell the persons at Excalibur House that none of them must leave the premises until the police arrived.

Welsh wondered whether to arrange for the attendance of the police surgeon. But, in view of Dr. Yorick's presence, this did not seem necessary unless Dr. Sambourne was likely to die, or any further untoward events occurred. Yorick, he knew, was a thoroughly good man; and it appeared safe to leave the medical aspect of the affair in his hands for the time being.

Having arranged for the coming of the police, Colonel Kennell first passed on to as many people as he could find the chief constable's order that no one was to leave the house, and then proceeded to carry out his intention of searching for the lost bottle of cyanide. He met Mrs. Moggridge in the hall, coming from the kitchen quarters on some errand for the doctor, and inquired of her whether there was yet any news of the missing Gurth. Mrs. Moggridge told him that her son had been found in his sister's room, in which he had taken refuge after stealing back into the house via the kitchen quarters. She had gone up to make sure that Patricia was all right, had found Gurth fast asleep on her daughter's bed, and had pushed him off to his own room, where she had left Patricia with orders to undress him and tuck him up safely, and then go straight to bed herself. She had not told either of them what had happened; nor had she questioned Gurth about his evil-doings. He had been much too sleepy, and she had wanted to get back to her brother.

Colonel Kennell showed a certain inclination to go and wake Gurth up and subject him to a third-degree examination. But Queenie Moggridge waxed so indignant at the idea, and was so firm in asserting that it would be impossible to get any sense out of her son before morning, that he gave way. Instead, he went and found Ivens, and with him made an exhaustive search of the library for the missing bottle. Thence they proceeded to the hall, where Colonel Kennell hunted through the pockets of all the overcoats on the pegs, and to the dining room, where they were still engaged when they heard the hoo of a car, followed by a peal at the front-door bell. Colonel Kennell went into the hall and opened the door to admit his old friend, the chief constable.

"Well, well, well, you're a nice fellow, lugging me out at his time of night after a hard day's work. Inspector Newt'll be along in half a jiffy, with one of my men. How's the patient getting along, by the by? Not dead yet, I hope?" Colonel

Welsh sounded very cheerful, as if he were hoping to have a pleasant bedside chat with Dr. Sambourne, who could there-after die or get better, just as he pleased.

Kennell opined that Dr. Sambourne was pretty bad, but did not know the latest news. The doctor, he said, had appeared to hold out some hope.

"Better go and ask, first thing, then," Welsh continued. "Only right and proper thing. Always begin by viewing the body, when there is one."

"It isn't a body. The man's alive," Kennell replied, "or was not long ago."

"So much better, my boy. A live dog's better than a dead one, by any showing. Where's the doings?" He noted a certain bewilderment on Kennell's face, and added, "I mean, where have they put the chap? Doctor with him, I suppose?"

"Yes, Dr. Yorick. He's over in a laboratory place he's got out at the back. I'll show you." He led the chief constable down the passage at the back of the hall, and across the open space between the house and the laboratory.

Colonel Welsh threw the door open, letting out a stream of light. There was no one in the laboratory itself; but voices were audible from the bedroom beyond. The bedroom door stood open. Welsh strode across and would have entered. But Oman stood in the doorway and barred his advance.

"No one else is to come in here. That's the doctor's orders."

"But I am the chief constable. I have come to investigate."

"I can't help that," said Oman doggedly. "Dr. Yorick said no one must be allowed in."

Dr. Yorick, looking up from his task, saw the chief constable. "Hallo, Welsh. You can't come in here. I'm busy. It's been touch and go, but I think we're pulling through."

"Fellah ought to be questioned—soon as possible," Welsh called back.

"He can't be—not for a long time. For God's sake go and sleuth somewhere else." Dr. Yorick turned back to his labours.

"Hadn't we better get on with searching the house for the missing bottle?" Kennell suggested, full of his one idea.

"Devil take the bottle!" said the chief constable. "The bottle's got nothing to do with it, as far as I was able to gather from what you told me."

"No, but . . ."

"Then why fuss about it? It'll turn up. What interest

is who's been dosing our friend in there with opium?
You said opium, didn't you?"

"That's what I was told. I'm no judge myself."

"Better ask that fellah at the door." He moved towards
the door of the bedroom. "Here, I say, you."

Oman said, "Yes? Were you wanting me? My name is
Oman. I am Dr. Sambourne's research assistant."

"Whoever you are, come in here a minute and answer a
few questions. You can easily keep your eye on the door just
the same."

Oman came into the laboratory. "What is it you want to
ask?" he asked.

"First, what the chap was poisoned with: opium,
isn't it?"

"Yes, I believe so. Laudanum, Dr. Yorick called it.
Of course, that is a . . ."

"Same thing, ain't it? Well, where'd he get it from?"

"There was laudanum in the poison-cupboard over there.

I am fairly sure a large quantity is missing; but I
n't had time to check that yet."

Nor you won't--yet," said Welsh. "Nothing must be
done until my inspector arrives. You understand that?"

Yes. . . . I had to touch a number of bottles to find
which ones were needed for Dr. Sambourne."

Can't be helped. Only, don't touch anything more.
One must keep a sharp eye on this place to make sure
there is no more monkeying about."

I'll do that," said Oman. "But I can't imagine how
Dr. Sambourne came to swallow the stuff."

Sort of fellah who might want to make away with
him? Eh?" Welsh inquired.

About the last in the world, in my opinion; and I know
pretty well."

Chemist, isn't he? Research-wallah and all that?
Gushed in his line, what?"

On strict confidence, I should hardly put him as high as
that. But he is my employer, and it would not be fitting for
me to say more."

Bit of a crank, eh? That's what I've heard said."

Oman nodded. "Quite. Let's leave it at that, shall we?"

Hardly. Point is, is he the sort of fellah who might
have made a silly bloomer, and dosed himself with the stuff
by mistake? Wasn't a regular opium taker by any chance,
isn't he?"

"Oh dear, no. Or it would not have had this effect on him. He was the last man to take drugs. He was always abstemious, apart from liking his glass of beer."

"'Pon my word, I could do with a glass myself," said Welsh.

"Nothing easier," said Oman. "You, too, Colonel Kennell?"

"I don't mind if I do."

"I am a teetotaler myself," said Oman. "But Dr. Sambourne always keeps a small barrel here for his own consumption. Rather special stuff, I believe, though I have never tasted it. Simmonds Five X, from Reading. Beer doesn't agree with me."

"First-class stuff, all the same," said the chief constable. "Lead me to it."

Oman went to the corner of the laboratory, took a couple of tumblers from a shelf, and leant down over a small barrel which stood there on trestles.

He poured out two foaming glasses and carried them across to the two colonels.

Welsh raised his glass. "Here's speedy recovery to the victim," he said, and was about to put the drink to his lips when a sudden thought struck him. "Stop!" he cried out to Colonel Kennell, just in time. "Don't touch the stuff just yet." He set down his glass, and pointed with his finger to a dirty tumbler standing by the laboratory sink. "Just occurred to me," he said. "Better be on the safe side. Looks as if our friend in there had been drinking some of this stuff not so long ago."

"You mean we ought not to touch anything?" Kennell said. "It seems a pity." He looked longingly at his glass.

"I mean the deuce of a lot more than that," Welsh answered. "I mean, I'm not taking any risks."

"You think it may be poisoned?" Colonel Kennell was aghast.

"I'm not saying it is, mind you," said the chief constable. "But I'm not risking it. Not meaning to die just yet, if can help it, or letting Yorick clean me out with a stomach pump either. The stuff may be O.K., but we'd better not g tempting Providence."

Oman picked up one of the glasses and sniffed at it. "I smells a bit odd to me," he said. "But my sense of smell pretty poor."

Welsh sniffed at the other glass. "Something wrong with

stuff, I'm pretty certain," he said. "Jolly glad I noticed : other tumbler just in time. Wouldn't look well—Chief stable emptied by stomach pump—and it might have e to that, or even worse. All the same, it'd have served ight, drinking on duty and messing up possible clues before inspector could get at 'em. I'd sack any of my men who such a thing. Damned nuisance! Have to tell Newte ; he'll have the laugh of me. Except that Newte never hs. Takes life seriously, Newte does. Good man, though, led our last murderer in these parts damned cleverly, , well, well. Hope we'll land the chap that put the stuff that barrel. That is, if somebody did. Dirty trick. it have murdered any one." He patted Oman on the . "Might have done you in, my lad, if you hadn't been of these damned tectotallers. Never could understand tallers myself. No *joie de vivre*. What I say is, eat, drink be merry. What have you got to say to that ? "

Only that beer makes me sick."

Welsh became suddenly serious. "I say. You said, didn't nobody was supposed to come in here except Dr. Samne and you ? "

No. It was I told you that over the phone," said ell.

Same thing. Well, now, if the murderer knew you didn't i the stuff, he was pretty safe to get Dr. Sambourne out hurting any one else. How about that ? "

Well. Dr. Sambourne does sometimes bring in a visitor."

What about these refugee fellahs he keeps here ? Would ing any of them in here, and offer them a drink ? "

He never has, to my knowledge—though, as I told el Kennell, I found one of them snooping about in here r to-day. But he might have brought in Mr. Potts, who drink beer. But, of course, the murderer, if there was may not have known about Mr. Potts being here. He arrived this afternoon."

Hm. Deuce of a risk to take, though. Any one else in the he might have given a drink to ? "

man pondered. "There is Mr. Moggridge. But he was so : when he arrived that certainly Dr. Sambourne would ave offered him any more."

Which Moggridge ? "Welsh demanded.

Dr. Sambourne's brother-in-law. He arrived unt- tedly, very drunk, while we were in the middle of dinner. en ourselves, he has been several times in an inebriates'

home ; but I never before saw him anything like he was this evening."

"Where is he now ? What happened to him after dinner ?"

"Mr. Potts and I had to carry him up to bed. He was very merry when he arrived ; and then he collapsed suddenly, and we put him to bed. Later, I remember Miss Philip said she heard him snoring through his bedroom door."

Colonel Welsh shot to his feet. "Good God, man ! Where's his bedroom ? Do you realise what you're saying ?"

"No, except that he was very drunk indeed. But I am sure Dr. Sambourne did not give him a drink. In fact, there was no opportunity. We were in the middle of dinner when he arrived ; and we put him to bed immediately afterwards."

"My good man," said the chief constable excitedly, "don't you realise that the commonest symptoms of acute opium poisoning are a period of drunken hilarity followed by deep sleep, accompanied by loud, stertorous breathing ?"

Oman gave a startled exclamation. "I . . . it never occurred to me," he said. "Do you mean . . ."

"I mean, take me to his bedroom in double quick time."

Oman led the way. They passed back into the house, leaving the laboratory unguarded in their excitement, and dashed upstairs to the bedroom, originally assigned to Queenie Moggridge, in which Rowland Moggridge had been put to bed after his exhibition at dinner and his sudden collapse when the meal was over.

Colonel Welsh flung open the bedroom door.

IV. SECOND ACT

I

DEAD BODY

ROWLAND MOGGRIDGE was no longer snoring. The four men—Oman, the chief constable, Colonel Kennell and Ivens—who crowded round the bed in which he lay were in no doubt of his being dead. He lay on his back, with eyes open and staring, and dilated pupils. The skin, when the chief constable touched it, was cold and clammy. The body was very rigid, and there were traces of foam about the mouth. Rowland Moggridge had drunk his last drink, and what was left of him was not pleasant to look upon.

Colonel Welsh said, "Poor beggar! Nothing Yorick can do there. We'd better leave him as he is till Newte comes. And I'd better get Dragon along to have a look at him." Dragon was the police surgeon.

"I suppose," said Oman nervously, "one of us ought to tell Mrs. Moggridge."

"Your job, Mr. Oman," said the chief constable. "Best go and get it over. Only don't let her come up here. Not a pretty sight. Not pretty at all."

"I . . . I shouldn't be a bit good at breaking it to her. She . . . she doesn't like me at all."

"None of us would, my boy. None of us would. But you know the lady better than I do. So get on with it. No sense in beating about the bush. Just be tactful. That's all. You'll be all right."

Oman seemed very reluctant to go; but the chief constable persisted. "Get along with you. And you, Kennell. Do you mind going down to the hall, and bringing that inspector of mine up here as soon as he arrives. You might phone too. Get Dr. Dragon, and tell him to come over at once. Say we've got a corpse for him, and anything else you care to tell him. Number's 03781. He'll be in bed, and he won't love you. But rout him out. All in the day's work."

"You go, Ivens," said Kennell.

"Both of you go," Welsh ordered. "You can phone, Kennell, while your friend keeps an eye on the laboratory."

We oughtn't to have left it unguarded when we came up here; but one can't think of everything at once. I'll be having a look round up here before the mugs get turning in."

"Come along, Ivens," said Kennell. "I suppose we'd better go."

"Good," said Welsh. As soon as the others had gone, he made a quick examination of the room, but found nothing of apparent importance. He then turned his attention to the dead man's clothes, which were lying on a heap in an arm-chair. He turned out the pockets, but they contained nothing but the usual assortment of odds and ends. There were no letters. The notecase contained a ration and registration card and a ration book, but little besides. There was no money, beyond some loose change in a pocket of the trousers—less than five shillings in all. The clothes themselves were shabby, though well cut. There was a cheap American watch without a chain. Also a couple of pawn tickets. Welsh put back the various objects in the pockets in which he had found them.

"Down and out, by the look of it," the chief constable muttered. "Might have done himself in, but it doesn't look as if he did—from what I've heard of him. Well, well. I wonder how the other fellah's getting along. Two corpses on my hands'd be a bit too much. Well, well. Might have been looking like that myself if I hadn't happened to spot that dirty tumbler just in time. Cheer up, my lad. Not dead yet. That inspector ought to be here by now." He sighed, and then added to himself, "Dare say the fellah's better out of it, when all's said and done."

Colonel Welsh's soliloquy was ended by a knock at the door. He shouted, "Come in!" and there entered Colonel Kennell, accompanied by a tall, thin man with a lugubrious expression.

"Evening, Newte. Bad business here. Name of Megg-ridge. You'd better have a look at him." He turned to Kennell. "Did you manage to get Dragon?"

"Yes. He's coming."

"Good. Any news of the fellah downstairs?"

"Ivens says Yorick is hopeful, but he's very weak. I left Ivens in the laboratory, as you said."

"Good. Oman told his wife yet?"

"No. He said he couldn't find her."

"Didn't want to, most likely. The woman must be about somewhere. This is her room, isn't it?"

"I don't know."

"Female gewgaws lying all over the place, anyway."

Presumably wife's. Wouldn't have put him to bed in another woman's bedroom. I mean, hasn't come to bed, so must be about. You go and tell Oman he's got to find her. Can't have her coming up here, you know." He jerked a finger in the direction of the bed. "Not pretty, not pretty at all. Poor woman! Still, perhaps she's a great rich-lady. You never know."

Colonel Kennell obediently retreated. Colonel Welsh chuckled, and said, "Go and see that old butter for the time being. Well, Newte, what about it? Don't look so deuced funeral. We're all got to die. Come clung near to dying myself just now. Kennell tell you about it?"

Colonel Kennell had not told the inspector, and the chief constable related his experience with gusto. "Caught sight of the dirty tumbler put in the milk. Another second, and I'd have been a dead man," he would Kennell. "Almost seems a pity. But I'm chattering. What of it, Inspector?"

"The man is dead," Newte began in a funeral tone.

"Good Lord! I know that," said Welsh. "Know what he died of, too, Oman, eh?"

"No, sir. Potassium cyanide. I can smell it quite plainly."

"Jumping Jeremy!" said the chief constable. "Can't be. It's all wrong. You're harking up the wrong tree there, Newte."

Newte said, "Pardon, sir, I think not. Go and smell for yourself, sir."

Welsh, with an incredulous stare at the inspector, did as he was bid. "By God, I believe you're right. Then somebody has been busy with that bottle of cyanide. But I thought . . . See here, Newte. It just won't fit in. Yorick said it was laudanum the fellow downstairs had in him, and it stands to reason . . ."

"I don't know about that, sir. But I can't be mistaken in this case."

"It beats me," said Welsh, scratching his head. "I tell you, Newte. I'm going to see if Yorick can spare time to come up here a minute, and make sure." He darted out of the room and hurried downstairs. A police sergeant was talking with Ivens in the hall. Ivens had apparently left his post in the laboratory, but Colonel Welsh was too excited to think of that.

"Mr. Oman's telling the lady—in there," said Ivens, locking a finger at the library door.

"Good," Welsh darted along the passage in the direction

of the laboratory. He ran full tilt into somebody who was entering the passage from the other side. "Who the devil are you?" he inquired, holding the man back.

"My name is Aronson. What is the matter?"

"Everything's the matter. But I can't stop now." He flung the little Austrian from him, and went on his way towards the laboratory. Dr. Aronson, who was wearing hat and overcoat, rearranged his clothing and proceeded into the hall, where he found Ivens and the police sergeant. He shrunk back; but the sergeant laid hold of him, saying, "Here! Who may you be?"

"I am Dr. Aronson. I have been for a short walk in de grounds. Dere is no harm in dat."

"You're the chap that was lost, aren't you?" said Ivens. "Where've you been all the evening?"

The question appeared to frighten Aronson. He shrank and shivered. "I have bin a short walk, as I told you."

"Aren't you aware all aliens have to be in at ten o'clock sharp?" said the sergeant. "That's the law, and you've been a-breaking of it. It's my duty to tell this inspector on you, and you'll be finding yourself in serious trouble."

Aronson trembled even more. But he said, "Dere is no law von may not walk in de garden, is dere? I am bad sleeper, and I make de little stroll before I retire myself."

"Strolling in the garden, at this time of night!" said Ivens derisively. "Tell that to the magistrate!"

"Was you meeting somebody?" the sergeant asked.

"No, no. I vas alone. I have no harm done. I will go to bed."

"I'm blest if you will," said Ivens, "not till you've answered a few questions. Look here, Sergeant. I happen to know that this little devil has been missing for hours. Nobody's set eyes on him since dinner."

"How long have you been out?" the sergeant asked. "Come now, no lying. I want the truth."

It was dawning upon Aronson that there must be something else amiss besides his own breach of the alien's curfew. He said miserably, "I do not know. My watch keep ver' late time."

"Ever since dinner, eh?"

Aronson was at length brought to admit that he had been away from the house for a considerable time, though he stuck to his story that he had only been walking in the grounds, and had encountered nobody. The sergeant said, "Here, you lot

bastard, you'd better come clean, if you don't want to get into serious trouble."

"I guess he's another of these apes," said Ivens. "We caught one of 'em already this evening, only the colonel let him go. This whole place is hot-buzzing with apes, I'm thinking."

"What's more," said the sergeant, "I'm thinking this chap may be the murderer."

"He's the man Mr. Oman told the colonel he had caught snooping in the laboratory, where he had no right to be."

"Then you can bet your boots he's our man," said the sergeant. "Look, the party, too, wouldn't you say?"

Dr. Aronson was, by this time in a condition of terminal collapse. But at the word "murderer" he gave a squall, and as soon as the sergeant paused, he said, more guttural than ever:

"Vat dat you say about murder? Dere has been no murder lat I know of. I have done no crime."

Ivens said, "You can take it from me there has been a murder—a damned nasty murder, same as a little swine like you would be up to. Two murders, one might say. If there's any sort of murder I hate special, it's a poisoner. Poison's a nasty, mean game, like putting a chap below the belt. Jhenglish, I call it. That's what I meant when I said it was ust what one expects of the likes of him."

"But I know nozzing," wailed Aronson, wringing his hands. "I have been out all de evening. I can prove dat."

"Oh, you can prove it, can you?" said the sergeant. "How can you prove it, if you didn't meet anybody while you were out?"

"But I did," said Aronson, driven to desperation. "I've spent de evening mit my friends. They must speak for me."

"Oho!" reported the sergeant. "We're getting to it at last, are we? Just now, you were saying you hadn't been outside the grounds."

"I . . . I did go only a little way," Aronson said, shaking like a jelly. "I meant no harm, not any. My friends are very good friends, in de village. I mean not to get dem into no trouble."

"You've gone too far to worry about that now," said the sergeant. "You just give me your friends' names, and we'll look at it."

But Aronson could not be induced for some time to give

away the identity of the friends he had been to visit. He admitted, readily enough, that he had gone down to the village pub for a drink after dinner, but where he had been since he was exceedingly reluctant to say. At last, however, the sergeant got an answer out of him. He had been to call on a lady in the village, but would not divulge her name. Actually, he had not found her at home, and had gone for a walk, and then tried again later in the evening, with no better success. He had then wandered about for some time between the village and Excalibur House, before his later return.

"Do you expect any one to believe that story?" the sergeant asked sceptically. "If the lady weren't in, why didn't you come home at once? It wasn't hardly a night any one in his senses would choose for a country walk."

"I was . . . I was upset, and I wanted to think. I knew I should not sleep if I did go home."

"What did you want to see the lady for?" Ivens inquired.

Aronson drew himself up to his little height. "Dat, sir, is my own affair. It is a private matter."

"But, look here," the sergeant persisted, "why did you say your friends would speak for you? How could the lady speak for you if you say she was out, and you didn't see her?"

Aronson collapsed. "But I did see her, when I went back for the last time."

"Oh, you did. First you say one thing, and then you say another. Once more I ask you, what's the lady's name?"

"I will not tell you."

"Oh, very well. You'll have to tell, of course, when the inspector asks you. But if so be as you prefer to wait for him have it your own way. What shall we do with the bastard Mr. Ivens, till the inspector's ready for him?"

"Shove him in one of the rooms, and lock the door," said Ivens. "Unless you'd like me to take him back with me to the laboratory, where I ought to have stopped by night, sooner the colonel said."

The sergeant shook his head. "It wouldn't do," he objected, "to put him in there—where there may be a lying round."

Aronson tried a last desperate appeal. He said piteously: "It is all a mistake—a very horrible mistake. Send, please, Dr. Sambourne, and ask him to speak for me. I will tell him everything."

"You know well enough, you little squirt," said Ivens "that Dr. Sambourne has been poisoned."

Dr. Aronson gave a yell of horror, and subsided into silence. The sergeant said, "What would best do, till I'm ready for you, is to sit yourself down on that chair, and not dare to move till I say you may."

Aronson obediently went to the hall chair and sat down upon it, huddling himself up in his misery. The sergeant turned to Ivens. "And as for you, Mr. Ivens, the sooner you get back to that laboratory the better, seeing as that is where you were told to remain. I can't move from this spot, because this is where Inspector Newtall be looking for me to be, and to see as no one goes in or out without leave."

"Will you be safe alone with him?" said Ivens, pointing to Aronson as if he were a highly dangerous criminal, who might be up to doing of violence at any moment.

"Oh, I'll look after him," said the sergeant contemptuously. "You get out to where you're wanted."

Hardly had Ivens gone when the door of the library was flung open, and Mrs. Moggridge rushed out in a distracted condition, with David Oman in pursuit.

"I must go to Kowland," Queenie Moggridge was crying. "Nothing shall keep me from him. How do I know what they are doing to him?"

"They cannot do him any harm now," said Oman.

"Why are you keeping me from him? I do not believe he is dead. I am sure they are trying to kill him."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Moggridge. I am sure you he is dead."

"Then why may I not go to him?"

"The chief constable said particularly I was not to allow you to go to him," Oman answered.

"Then I must go to my poor fatherless children," said Mrs. Moggridge, making a dash for the stair.

The sergeant stepped in her way. "If I may say so, ma'am," he said, "you had much better leave the chicks to sleep the sleep of innocence till morning. There'll be trouble enough then."

"Really, Mrs. Moggridge . . ." Oman began.

Queenie observed Aronson for the first time. "What is that horrible little man doing there?"

"He has been behaving suspiciously, and I have detained him pending inquiries," said the sergeant.

Mrs. Moggridge gazed at Aronson. "Is he my husband's murderer?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. At least not as I know of. You just try to ake things easy, ma'am, if I may offer my advice."

"But I must do something, or I shall go mad," said Mrs. Moggridge. "Oh, that it should have come to this!"

"Well, ma'am, of course it must be a bit of a blow," said the sergeant. "But you first take it easy."

"Easy!" said Mrs. Moggridge, her indignation conquering her sorrow. "Will you kindly mind your own business, and let me go to my husband!"

"Sorry, ma'am," said the sergeant. "But orders is orders. I can't let you go upstairs unless the order is amended." He placed himself firmly at the foot of the stairs.

"Really, Mrs. Moggridge," Oman put in, "you could do no good. The police are in possession of your room, and . . ."

Queenie Moggridge glared at him. Then she rushed back into the library, slamming the door behind her.

"I suppose someone ought to be with her," said Oman.

"If you're a friend of the lady, sir," the sergeant suggested,

"I'm not," said Oman. "At any rate, she doesn't think I am."

The sergeant pointed at Dr. Aronson. "Shall we shove this little blighter in there with her, and lock the door?"

"You can't," Oman objected. "The law's fast!"

Ivens had reappeared in the hall, and had overheard what was being said. He put in, "Shove him in, all the same, and tell him he'll get bitful over the head if he comes out."

"I can't be a party to that," said the sergeant.

"O.K. My funeral," said Ivens. "Here, you little toad, you get into that room and comfort the lady." Aronson rose obediently and went towards the library door. After a moment's hesitation, he opened it and went in, shutting it softly behind him. Oman at the same time went out by the door leading to the back of the house.

"Look 'ere, now," said the sergeant, "what you've been and gone and done. S'posing that bloke's the murderer? See? Shoving 'im in with the corpse's widow!"

"Oh Lord!" exclaimed Ivens. "I clean forgot that."

"Forgetful, aren't you?" the sergeant commented. "Well, I guess it's no use crying over spilt milk. But it was you shoved him in there with 'er, not me. And what I'd like to know is why you keep a-bobbing out of that laboratory, instead of stopping on guard there, the same as you said you was told."

"I hadn't got a match on me," said Ivens, "and I want smoke. Lend me a match, can you?"

The sergeant, rather reluctantly, produced a box o

matches. "Here you are," he said, "but remember they're scarce these days."

Ivens lighted his pipe, returned the matches, and made his way morosely back to his post.

2

IN THE HALL

COLONEL WELSH came hurrying back into the hall, followed by Dr. Yorick. He had been a long time in getting Dr. Yorick; for he had found the doctor at a moment when he absolutely refused to leave his patient; and the chief constable had waited in the bedroom, tanning, until Yorick at last consented to accompany him. Welsh said to the sergeant, "What became of that little blighter in the overcoat? Fellow I barged into just now in the passage."

"I have put him in the library, sir."

"Know who he is? What's he been doing out, this time of night?"

"Name of Aronson, sir. He said he had been for a walk. I asked him a number of questions, and . . ."

"Walk be jiggered. Well, keep him safe till we're ready for him. Come on, Yorick."

Colonel Welsh and Dr. Yorick disappeared up the stairs without giving the sergeant any opportunity to make a further report. Hardly had they gone when there was a peal at the bell. The sergeant went to the door, and admitted a tall heavy man with big, drooping moustaches. "Evening, Doctor."

Dr. Dragon, the police surgeon, peeled off his heavy overcoat. He asked, "Is the chief constable here?"

"Yes, Doctor, and Inspector Newte. The chief has just gone upstairs with Dr. Yorick."

"Yorick, eh? Is he the man's doctor?"

"Not the corpse's, sir, but the other gentleman's—Dr. Sambourne's. He's been poisoned too. Dr. Yorick has been with him all the evening."

"Hm. Alive or dead, do you happen to know?"

"I am told that Dr. Yorick seemed to think he might pull through."

"Well, I'd better get on with my job at once. Where's the body?"

The sergeant said he did not know exactly in which room the dead man was to be found.

"Oh, well, I'll find 'em," Dr. Dragoon strode away heavily up the stairs.

There was a sound of voices, and a number of persons came into the hall from the rear of the house. Colonel Kennell was in the van, talking to George Potts. Behind them came Oman, Dr. Franck, and Dr. Rossini. Kennell said to the sergeant that Dr. Sanbourne was now much better, and it had been considered safe to put him to bed. The women were looking after him.

Kennell approached the library door. "I shouldn't go in there, Colonel," the sergeant suggested. "The lady's in there, with a little fellow called Aronson."

"What lady?" Kennell asked, with his hand on the door-handle.

"The widow, sir," said the sergeant.

"Good God!" Kennell commented. "We'd better go somewhere else."

"Come to my room," Oman suggested. "I can find you some beer. No whisky to be had, I'm afraid."

"No beer for me," said Kennell hastily. "I've had quite enough of beer for one night."

Potts said, "By the way, what happened to the glass you and the chief constable nearly drank out of?"

"Good heavens! I suppose they're still in that library."

Oman said, "It's all right. I locked them up. Can I get any one any beer—not out of the same barrel, of course?"

No one seemed to relish the notion. Kennell, Potts and Oman went away towards the back of the house in the direction of Oman's study. Franck remained in the hall, and began questioning the sergeant; and Rossini stayed listening for a minute or two, and then slipped away towards the end of the house.

"You are the police? You are in charge here?" Franck inquired.

"No. Colonel Welsh is in charge, with Inspector Newton on guard here till further instructions. Were you wanting anything?"

"Who is Colonel Welsh? Another of your Home Guard perhaps?"

"No," said the sergeant. "Colonel Welsh is the chief constable."

"Please? A constable is, is he not, your lowest policeman?"

"Yes, but a chief constable is the highest—or thinks he is. The colonel's a corker."

The sergeant seemed to be amused.

"A corker? What does he cork?" Franck asked.

"I suppose you wouldn't understand the expression, sir, being a foreigner, as I judge. But a corker is a—well, a top-notch, so to speak."

"I see. You mean a great man, is it not?"

"You can take it that way," said the sergeant shortly.

"And this chief constable investigates the murder?"

"Him and the inspector. 'Tis the inspector's job, more properly speaking."

"You mean the chief constable interferes where he is not wanted?" Franck asked, with a broad smile.

"Come now. I never said nothing of the sort. You won't mind my saying you ask a lot of questions."

"It is good to know things," said Dr. Franck. "This Mr. Moggridge has been poisoned the same way as Dr. Sambourne, is it not?"

"Couldn't say," said the sergeant.

"It must be," Franck asserted. "It surprises me, Sergeant, that your chief constable and your inspector leave unguarded the laboratory where the poisoned beer remains."

"A man called Ivens is on guard there," said the sergeant.

"None of your business, you won't mind my saying."

"There was no one there when I looked in just now," Franck persisted.

"Don't you worry," said the sergeant. "We'll attend to everything. You just mind your own business till Inspector Newte is ready for you. He's busy upstairs."

"Yet it would be truly unfortunate if some person were to desire to drink, and were to be poisoned by accident."

"Hardly likely," said the sergeant. "They all knows about it."

"Or to disturb the clues," Franck went on. "There may be valuable finger-prints."

"I grant you that's a point," said the sergeant. "But my orders is to stay on guard here."

"But you agree the laboratory should be guarded?"

"I told you, there's a man ought to be on guard there. And I also told you to mind your own business." The sergeant turned his back on his questioner.

Franck shrugged his shoulders. "I will join the others in Mr. Oman's room," he said. He pushed open the door leading to the back part of the house and disappeared. The sergeant was left alone in the hall.

A minute or two later, Quennie Meggidge emerged from the library. She looked haggard, and had evidently been weeping.

She said to the sergeant, "I cannot remain any longer with that dreadful man. I must go to my husband. Are you in charge?"

"No, madam." The sergeant went on to explain that his superiors were still upstairs investigating.

"I shall go up," said Mrs. Meggidge. "I cannot endure this any longer."

The sergeant looked doubtful. "I've no further orders, ma'am."

"Then you have no reason to prevent me," she went to the stairs and vanished from view. The sergeant did not venture to prevent her. He had an uneasy conscience about letting her be shut up in the library with a man who might be her husband's murderer. Dr. Aronson peeped nervously out of the library door.

"Am I for to shtop here all de night?" he asked. "I would go to bed."

"You just stop where you are till I tell you," the sergeant retorted; and Dr. Aronson retreated into the library.

Dr. Yorick came down the stairs. He nodded to the sergeant. "Newte's just coming," he said. "I'm going to have another look at my patient." He went out, in the direction of the laboratory. A minute or two later, Rosamund came running down the passage from the back of the house.

"You policeman," he cried excitedly. "You come at once. Dr. Franck he 'ave assaulted me."

"Come now. What's the matter?" said the sergeant.

"I tell you. Dr. Franck he 'ave hit me."

"What did he hit you for?"

"He tell a me I must not go in the laboratory. Why he must I not go? I go to inquire for the health of Dr. Sam bourne."

Franck pushed open the door leading from the rear quarters. He came menacingly towards Rosamund, who shrunk back behind the sergeant.

"Come, what's all this?" said the sergeant. "Can't you any brawling here."

"I found Dr. Rossini meddling with the things in the laboratory," said Franck.

"Wasn't Ivens there?" asked the sergeant.

"No one was there, except this man," answered Franck.

"You did hit me," Rossini persisted.

"I only took you by the collar and pulled you off."

"What was he doing, do you say?" the sergeant asked of Franck.

"He was trying to open a cupboard."

"What were you doing that for?" the sergeant questioned Rossini. "We can't have anything interfered with, till the inspector has finished with it."

"I was not trying to open anything," Rossini said, waving his hands. "I was only having a look round."

"What for? You better mind your own business," said the sergeant.

"He was trying to open the cupboard," Franck persisted.

"I was not, and you have no right to hit me. You are one great big bully. Yahi!"

From behind the sergeant's bulk, Rossini made a derisive gesture at his antagonist.

The sergeant was considering what to do when he heard sounds above. Colonel Welsh was descending the stairs, in company with Dr. Dragon.

"Very well, then," Dragon was saying. "Get him round to the mortuary first thing in the morning, and I'll go over him properly. Not that I feel much doubt; but we'll see in the morning, for certain." He picked up his coat and put it on.

"Westinghouse," Welsh said to the sergeant, "Newte wants you to go up and take over from him in the bedroom. It's on the second floor, away at the back. Last room down the corridor. You stay on guard there, and don't let anybody come in. Especially not the wife."

"The lady insisted on going upstairs, sir. I didn't quite know what I ought to do."

"Never mind that now," said Welsh. "We've put her into her daughter's room for the time being. That's in the same corridor—the near end as you enter. The boy's in the room on the other side. But Newte'll post you. You get right up now."

Sergeant Westinghouse wondered whether to mention the altercation between Franck and Rossini, but decided not to tell the chief constable, but to report the incident at once to

Inspector Newte. He went upstairs, leaving them with the chief constable.

"Well, well," said Colonel Kennell. "What a night! Who are you two fellows, by the way?"

"My name is Franck."

"Foreigner, eh? Like Frank? One of Sandbourne's menagerie, what? At least, that's what may well be."

Franck explained that he had only arrived that night, to be added to the number of the Sandbourne's guests.

"And you?" Welsh turned to Rossini. "You two came together? Friends, eh?"

Rossini answered indignantly that no, Franck was no friend of his. But he did not renew the charge of assault.

Franck said, "I was telling the sergeant I had found this person meddling with things in the laboratory, which I consider ought to be guarded."

Rossini poured out a flood of expostulations, until the chief constable stopped his ears.

"Be quiet," he said loudly. "Well, go into all that presently, or Newte will. You just keep quiet till you're told. Here you—Franck or whatever your name is."

"Franck!"

"Well. D'you know where Colonel Kennell's got to? Or the fellow who was with him?"

"I believe they are in Mr. Oman's room—through there."

"Fetch 'em, will you?"

Franck went on his errand, and Rossini attempted to renew his explanations. Welsh silenced him. "I told you shut up," he said. He saw Colonel Kennell, who came in the back of the hall. "Hallo, Kennell. Want you or your friend to go and stand guard in that laboratory place, to see nobody touches anything—especially those fellows be Mind doing that?"

"I thought Ivens was on guard there," said Kennell. "It was when I looked in a while ago. I say, Welsh, I was just thinking of getting home. Now your fellow here is changing."

"Then put it off. There's a good fellow. We're damn short-handed."

"I'll make sure Ivens is doing it," said Kennell. "The reason why he shouldn't stop. But I must be getting off." He went back the way he had come. Potts and Oman came to the hall a moment later; and almost at the same time Inspector Newte came down the stairs.

Potts said, "We came to see if we could be of any help

SECOND ACT

"Sure you can," said Welsh. "Kennell per off home, and . . . What if you say, Newte?"

"I should like all those who are not otherwise assemble in one of the rooms and wait till I am Newte announced."

"Better shove 'em in the library," Potts said.

"Not there," said Oman. "She's in there."

"If you mean Mrs. Mansbridge, she isn't."

"She's gone up stairs."

"I said she wasn't to," Newte exclaimed.

"Well, she did," the chief constable answered.

"You are sure we can't help?" Potts repeated.

Welsh said, "No, you leave it to Newte."

"Then I suppose we'd better go into the lib Oman," if you're sure we can't be more helpful thing, instead of just waiting."

"Much best just to do what you are told," said

Potts and Oman went into the library, and Ross after a moment's hesitation. Then he popped his

"Please not to forget to shut up Mr. Frank. He is

"Where is Frank?" asked the chief constable here just now."

"I don't know him, sir," Newte answered. "many of them. He's probably slipped off somehow is he?"

"Oh, one of the foreigners. Says he only arrive. Probably doesn't matter. Well, Newte, you're What's the plan of campaign?"

"Is there any one on guard in the laboratory Newte inquired.

"Yes, Kennell and Evans was, and he'd see stopped there. What's next?"

"I should like to get hold first of the person most be able to tell a connected story, and consider the after we've heard it. How would that be, sir?"

"Capital! Better have the secretary fellow, or he is, I suppose."

"Or the other gentleman, sir? Didn't you say the corpse's brother-in-law?"

"Sambourne? You can't talk to him, Yorick saw. You mean Potts. Yes, Potts'll be best. He's fellow, I've always thought. I'll fetch him out."

"We shall need to borrow a room, sir," the inspector where we can have them in one by one."

"We'll ask Potts about that." Welsh threw open the library door, and called to George Potts, who came out at once. The chief constable explained their requirements.

"We could go to my brother-in-law's study," said Potts. "Or the dining-room's empty. How'll this do?" He went to the dining-room door and threw it open.

"Splendid!" said Welsh. "Now, Mr. Potts, if you don't mind, Inspector Newte would like to ask you a few questions."

3

ACCORDING TO POTTS

"Now, Mr. Potts," said the chief constable, "Inspector Newte wants you to tell him the whole story. You understand, he's in charge. I shall simply sit here and not say a word."

"I don't know most of the story," Potts answered. "I only got here this evening, you know, with Mrs. Moggridge and her children. But I will tell you what I can, of course."

"You just fire right ahead," said the chief constable; "and Newte'll pull you up when you go off the rails."

"Where do you want me to begin?"

"Well, Newte, where shall we begin? Who discovered that Dr. Sambourne had been poisoned?"

"Quite a number of us. Let me see. There were Oman and Miss Philip and Mrs. Moggridge and I. Yes, and Colonel Kennell and that Home Guard who was with him. No, I'm wrong. He wasn't there. Possibly Mudge too. He's the man-servant. I'm not sure whether Mudge was there or not. I think that's the lot."

"How did you come to discover him?"

"We were searching the house, because we couldn't find him anywhere, and Kennell wanted to speak to him about Dr. Franck. He had some idea of Franck being a spy. Why exactly, I don't know. All rot, I should say. We hunted through the ground floor and the basement first; and then we tried the laboratory, and found him in the bedroom there he sometimes uses. He was lying on the floor. I think someone—yes, it was Miss Philip—had tried the laboratory earlier, but hadn't gone into the bedroom, and so missed him."

"I notice, Mr. Potts, you don't mention any of the

SECOND ACT

foreigners as being present when you found Dr. St. Where were they?" asked Newte.

"In the library," Pats answered. "At least, in were. We left 'em with orders to stop there while's the place."

"Any particular reason for doing that?"

"Depends what you mean. I think Quercule proposed it, and Kennell jumped at the idea; and seem worth while to argue about it. The position Franck had shown some desire to take charge of the Kennell, who'd arrested him earlier in the even annoyed. Kennell doesn't like foreigners. Nor a sister-in-law."

"Was there any reason to suspect bad play—that time?" the chief constable put in.

"None, really. I didn't take it seriously, I confess stage. But it was all a bit of a mix up with that blas stealing the example."

"What's that?" Newte inquired. "I've heard about that. What boy?"

"Gurth Mongeridge. He's my sister-in-law's son—th of a brat. It seems he broke into Dr. Sambourne's la pinched the stuff."

"When was that?"

"I don't know exactly. I didn't hear about it til Oman knows. He caught him at it. Kennell knows it and Franck captured the boy and the bottle. Only Gurth escaped again, and I'm told the bottle got lost."

"Where is it now?"

"I haven't an idea. I haven't heard of it being But it may have been."

"And the boy? Where is he?" Newte asked.

"I believe he's in bed. His mother found him later sister's room and sent him to bed. I guess he's fast as

Colonel Welsh broke in impatiently. "Never mind ow. When you all found Dr. Sambourne, was he a peak?"

"No. He was much too far gone. It's a wonder live. He wouldn't have been, if it hadn't been for the male. She was a wonder. Yorick said she'd done about ly thing that could possibly have saved his life."

Newte intervened. "I hope you won't mind my ning, sir," he said to the chief constable; "mentioning so many people that I am getting

sighed deeply. "Wouldn't it be better if we began by getting a list of all these people, and who they all are?"

"Just as you please," Welsh answered. "It's your case, Inspector. I'm leaving it entirely to you."

"Very good, sir. Well, then, Mr. Potts, do you mind beginning like that? First, who usually live here, in addition to Dr. Sambourne?"

"Well, there's Oman to begin with, and Miss Philip. And Mr. and Mrs. Mudge, and of course the refugees."

"I know Mr. Oman. He's the secretary, isn't he?"

"Not quite. He's a qualified chemist, and Sambourne's research assistant. Been with him for years. Miss Philip is the secretary. She's new. Used to be a girl called Monkhouse; but she left."

"Do you know anything about Miss Philip?"

"Seems a very nice girl. That's all I can tell you. Never saw her till to-night."

"The Mudges. What sort of people are they?"

"Very queer. They've been with Sambourne ever since I can remember. I never could understand how he put up with them. Rotten servants, with the devil of a temper, and apt to be impertinent. Not to me, mind. But they made themselves damned unpleasant to every one else."

"Honest, would you say?"

"I wouldn't know. I never heard they weren't, unless you regard scamping your work as dishonesty—which it is. Mrs. Mudge is a good cook, though. She doesn't scamp that side of her job."

"Must be a dence of a business, running this place with only two servants," Colonel Welsh put in. "Or are there any others?"

"No, there aren't. Most of the house used to be shut up till Sambourne started keeping a sort of asylum for refugees. Since then the Mudges must have had ground for complaint, though I believe the visitors help with the housework."

"May we come to them now?" Newte said. "How many are there?"

"I'm not sure I know. You'd much better ask Oman, or Miss Philip. Seven or eight, I should say. I know some of them—a Dr. Meyerbeer and his wife, Dr. Gluck, Dr. Aronson—and I met Dr. Franck for the first time this afternoon. They all seem to be doctors of one sort or another. It's a sort of habit in these continental countries. Nothing to do with medicine or doctor. It's more or less like our M.A. Just

means they've got university degrees, and like going around labelled. Then there is a bloke from Italy, by name Rossini. Excitable little devil, always bobbing up and down. He's another newcomer. Wasn't here when I was over last three months ago."

"What sort of people are they? You said Meyer—something."

Potts spelt it for him. "Meyerbeer. Old fossil of a professor, who orders his wife about as if she was dirt. She's a typical German *Frau*. Both dull as ditchwater."

"But harmless, you would say?"

"Oh Lord, yes! At least, unless appearances are very deceptive. Meyerbeer's the sort of chap who can't talk about anything except his internal researches. He grumbles all the time about how his work is being upset. Also about his wife being put upon, though he puts upon her much more than any one else."

"Damn good character sketch, Mr. Potts," said the chief constable. "Keep on at it. Who's next?"

"You mentioned a Dr. Gluck," said Newte.

"Gluck. U, with two little dots over it," said Potts. "Dr. Glück is a professional psychologist, or psychiatrist, or something of that sort. They breed them in Vienna, where she comes from. Ugly as sin, fat and forty, clever in her way, I should guess, and very well aware of it. Likes ordering people about, and saying cattish things about 'em. But not a bad sort for them that like that sort of woman."

"Sympindid!" Welsh exclaimed. "Who's next?"

"Aronson. Dr. Kurt Aronson. Hideous little squirt of a chap, Jewtewish, of course. Sort of walking encyclopaedia. Dr. knows about everything, and has perpetual rows with Sam Perlebourne. Tries to set him right when he gets on his bobbing up; and Sambourne doesn't like it a bit. Also, he eats with his mouth open, is as blind as a bat, and always looks darn. Bless Sam any more."

Udridge Welsh positively clapped this time.

"The shouldethers I barely know," Potts went on. "Rossini, I know once an engineer by profession—the sort that builds bridges and sences that kind of thing. At any rate, he says so. What y, all I can tell you about him is that he jabbers. rack, an," is t he other hand, I rather like the look of. He was syhap Newte hawhen I ran into him at the station this afternoon. was me for thng my sister-in-law and her brats at Middlebury act, docad, as usual, Queenie had the devil of a lot of

luggage. If you've seen Franck, you'll know he's immensely tall, and as strong as a horse. All I can tell you about him is that he seems cheerful and energetic, though he's a bit dictatorial in his manner. He speaks excellent English. Oh yes, and he's an old friend of Dr. Glick's—so she tells me. Knew him in Austria and seems to love him dearly. My sister-in-law's luggage crowded him out of the car this afternoon, and I had to leave him to find his way here on foot in the dark. I didn't like doing it; but I didn't see what else I could do. The result was that he ran into that old fool Kennell, who promptly arrested him as a spy. I damned lot of rubbish! At all events, he turned up here under Kennell's escort; and then the shemozzle began."

"Who is he?" Newte asked.

"Dunno. Except that he's an Austrian, and just released from the Isle of Man. Probably Viennese. Good people, the Viennese, till Hitler got at 'em."

"Alien enemies now," said Welsh. "Pity, pity. Is that the lot?"

"I think so—of the aliens, I mean. Of course, there's Queenie Moggridge and her children. As I told you, I brought them up in my car from the station. Damn nuisance. She's my sister-in-law—my wife's sister, Sambourne's her brother—but I don't mind telling you I can't bear the sight of her."

"Nor can my wife," said the chief constable. "They met once, and had a stand-up fight."

"I notice you did not mention Mr. Moggridge," it said to the inspector. "Did you bring him up too in the car?"

"No. He arrived later—quite unexpectedly, since we were at dinner. He didn't know his wife was here. Care the Sambourne—to borrow money, I fully expect."

"Didn't he live with his wife, then?" Newte pe shut

"No. Rowland Moggridge was a thorough bad refugee like a fish. He was supposed to be in an intermediate complaint was as drunk as a lord when he turned up this eve'ing."

"Oh, was he? You say that was while you were how many. Can you tell me about what time?"

"Not accurately. Well after eight, probably. Oman, e past. Does it matter?"

"You say he was drunk. How drunk was he, Aronson—

"Pretty bad. He was in the excitable moon. The twenty-four to the dozen, and making a racket, a sort of you understand me, or even hilarious. Couldn't to do with and kept reeling about all over the place. Out M.A. Ju

hibition, in point of fact. His wife tried to get him to bed, at he wouldn't go till he'd had dinner. Then he went drowsy of a sudden; and Onan and I had actually to carry him upstairs and put him to bed. We got his clothes on, and left him to sleep it off. And then—by Jove!"

Potts stopped suddenly. His jaw fell open.

"Quite, Mr. Potts," said the inspector. "It has now curbed to you, has it now, that Mr. Moggridge may not have been drunk in any ordinary sense?"

"It has," said Potts. "I've read something somewhere out the effects of opium poisoning. Doesn't it sometimes use a period of drunken infatuation followed by collapse and business?"

Newte nodded. "Yes, that is not uncommon." He turned to the chief constable. "The doctor confirms me out that, sir."

"Then . . . you are suggesting Moggridge may have been the poison before he arrived here at all?" Potts looked puzzled. "But surely that doesn't make sense. If the son came out of the beer barrel, as I understood it did, and Sainbourne was poisoned too, surely it stands to reason they drank the stuff together—after dinner. No, that doesn't make sense either, because I put Moggridge to bed immediately after dinner. There wasn't a chance for him to drink it after dinner. Unless he got up again, and I'm sure he couldn't have, was much too far gone. I can't make it out at all. When he drank the stuff, if he did drink it— I know he didn't eat any beer at dinner. Besides, the dinner beer comes out different barrel, I happen to know."

Newte didn't answer Pott's questions. Instead he asked, "Did Dr. Sainbourne appear quite normal at dinner?"

"Perfectly. Besides, he was very surprised at Moggridge coming up. They had a bit of a row, in fact. So there wasn't any when they could possibly have drunk the stuff together. Besides Sainbourne was only pretending to be surprised when Moggridge arrived, and he didn't seem as if he was. Besides, he should have pretended—unless—" Potts left his face unflushed, and then added, "But that wouldn't make sense either."

laboratory before dinner? How did he arrive, by the way? By car, or how?"

"On his feet, I think. But I don't know. There was a ring at the front-door bell; and Mudge went out and opened it, and he came in. I didn't hear any car."

"Were you all at dinner together? I mean, all the people you have mentioned?"

"Yes, except Franck, who hadn't then arrived. It was only afterwards Dr. Aronson got mislaid."

"Oh! How was that?"

"Well, it was only that, when we were all looking for Sambourne, we couldn't find Aronson either, and it came out nobody had seen him since dinner. He's turned up since, though."

"Do you know when?"

"No. Only somebody said he'd been found. And he was in the library just now with the others."

"And after dinner, Mr. Potts? What happened after dinner?"

"As I told you, Oman and I put Moggridge to bed. And then I came downstairs to look for Sambourne. I wanted to talk to him on a matter of business. But he was in the laboratory; and I knew it was no use trying to talk to him then because Oman said he was busy on an experiment. So I sat about a bit, until he came into the house; and then I went and spoke with him in his study."

"What time was that?"

"Ten o'clock or a little after. I was only there a few minutes. Sambourne was very unreasonable, and I soon saw it was no use arguing with him then."

"You quarrelled?"

Potts smiled. "Oh, no. I never quarrel with him. I told him he was being an ass, and came away."

"What was the business you were discussing with Dr. Sambourne?"

"It was about the works. He's chairman of my board of directors, and the principal shareholder. He holds the controlling interest. The firm needs money for expansion, for important Government orders; and the bank is ready to advance it. But Sambourne has a violent prejudice against bankers, and refuses to agree to an overdraft. Damn silly; but he's a most pig-headed chap. I'm telling you this in confidence; but of course it has absolutely nothing to do with this wretched affair."

Newte nodded. He said mournfully, "You say you did not barrel, but you disagreed. Did you part on good terms?"

Potts laughed. "Perfectly. I told him he was a bloody old, and walked out."

"What did he say?" Welsh put in.

"I didn't stop to listen. What he'd been saying before was that he always did say a lot of rubbish about the bankers being all in a conspiracy to do honest men down. He always went on like that."

"Did he seem to you quite normal, Mr. Potts?" Newte asked.

"Very much so."

"Not specially excited, or as if he were the worse for drink? You understand what I mean."

"Not a sign of it. If he'd drunk the stuff then, it hadn't got time to act. I should think he drank it later."

"By the way, Newte," Welsh put in, "do you know how long it is before opium poisoning takes effect?"

Newte shook his head. "I believe it varies greatly," he answered. "That's what Yorick said, and Dragon agreed. I just can't tell."

"So he may have been poisoned before Mr. Potts saw him—though he did appear quite normal. Didn't you say you was with him in the laboratory after dinner?"

"Yes. That is, he went there after he'd helped me put Moggridge to bed."

"Do you remember what Dr. Sambourne drank after?" Newte inquired. "What did all of you drink?"

"No such luck," Potts answered. "Wine's scarce these days. Dr. Sambourne and I, and one or two others, had beer. As I told you, it came out of a different barrel, which is kept in the pantry. Dr. Gluck drank beer, I remember. The others drank water. There was a decanter of port on the side, but nobody drank any. I could have done with a glass; but Dr. Sambourne didn't offer us any."

"None of you, except Dr. Sambourne and Mr. Moggridge, saw any evil effects, I take it?"

"No. The beer was O.K. That shows it didn't come from the barrel in the lab."

"Do you know that?"

"No. I only know Mudge brought in a jug of the stuff, and that he draws it from the barrel in the pantry."

"Did Moggridge drink any?"

"No. He drank water, and then coffee. I remember Mudge brought him in a big cup of black coffee, and I gulped it down. It was after that he turned sober and begged to go to sleep."

Newte said, "Oh, Mudge brought the coffee, did he? Well, I asked for it? Moggridge?"

"No one, as far as I remember. Mudge just brought it in. I thought it unusually thoughtful of him. It had a remarkably good effect. Mudge isn't generally all that helpful."

"We must look into that, Newte," said the chief constable. "What happened after you left Sambourne in his study, Potts?"

"Nothing much. I potted about a bit, went upstairs and came down again, and saw Gurth Moggridge running through the hall, with Oman after him. I tried to catch him, but he wriggled out of my hands and dashed out of the front door. Oman said he'd caught him snooping about in the lab."

"Did Oman say what he had stolen?"

"No. I don't think he knew, then. He only said the boy had been messing about in the lab."

"You didn't chase the boy any farther?"

"No. There wouldn't have been much chance of catching him outside, in the dark. I went to look for Miss Philip in the secretary's room. But she wasn't there. Then I talked to Queenie—Mrs. Moggridge—for a bit, in the drawing-room upstairs, until Oman and Colonel Kennell routed us out and we all went down to the library. Then we started looking for Sambourne, and after that I was busy with him. Frankly, I walked him up and down for what seemed to be hours."

That was the substance of what George Potts had to tell. Asked by Colonel Welsh whether he had any notion, even the vaguest, in his head as to the identity of the person who had poisoned Dr. Sambourne, he said that he had not the smallest idea. He simply could not imagine why any one should want to kill his brother-in-law. But he didn't profess to know much about Dr. Sambourne's relations with the refugees.

"Do you happen to know who his heir is?" Newte enquired.

"Bless my soul!" said Potts. "I suppose Queenie Moggridge is, jointly with my wife. He has no other near relation."

"Has he made a will?"

"Yes. Some years ago. I reckon it stands. I'm executor."

"Can you tell me the name of his lawyers?"

"Cottle, Keats and Lloyd, of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mr Keats is the man you want. Shall I phone him in the morning? No, damn it all, it's Sunday. I will phone him on Monday morning, if you want me to."

"Aren't you both talking rather as if Sambourne were dead?" Colonel Welsh put in. "I understood he was getting better."

"Still, Mr. Keats had better be told what has happened," Potts said. "I suppose Sambourne won't be fit to attend to business for some time. I think I'll phone. My affairs won't stand still, you know. Not with a war on."

"Please do," said Newte. "And find out for certain whether the will stands. It may be important."

4

ACCORDING TO OMAN

DAVID OMAN was the next person to be interrogated. He came in, looking very tired, flopped down into the chair which the inspector indicated, and said, "I'll do what I can, of course; but I warn you I'm pretty nearly all in."

"What we want from you, Mr. Oman," the chief constable began, "is as clear a picture as you can give us of this very peculiar household. We should like you to speak quite frankly—of course, in confidence. Have you any notion of who would have wanted to kill Dr. Sambourne?"

"Is that a fair question, really? I have no knowledge of any one wanting such a thing."

"But you have an idea? Your answer suggests that."

"Well," said Oman. "It's hardly even an idea, and I give it to you for what it is worth. I have often suspected that one or more of these foreigners is a Nazi agent."

"Oho!" said the chief constable. "Any evidence of that, eh?"

"Evidence, hardly. But I regard it as probable. My idea is that whoever it is was interested in Dr. Sambourne's researches, that Dr. Sambourne discovered this, and that the person knew this and attempted to murder him."

"Do you mean," Newte asked, "that Dr. Sambourne's research work is of a kind that would interest an enemy agent?"

"Very much so," Oman answered. "That is, if he really invented what he is trying to. I would rather not say what that is, in view of my confidential position. But Potts could tell you, if he will. He knows what it is."

"Which of 'em is it you suspect, Mr. Oman?" Newte inquired.

"It may be more than one. I . . . I hardly like to name any names. You see, I have very little to go upon."

"Come, come. We are speaking in confidence."

Oman lowered his voice nearly to a whisper. "I suspect Eva Glück, for one," he said.

"The psychiatrist female? On what grounds?"

"What first made me suspect her was her inquisitiveness. She is continually asking questions."

"Any particular sort of questions?"

"All sorts. She would, you know, to cover up what she is really trying to find out. At least, that is how I see it."

"Does she ask questions about troop-movements of that sort of thing?"

"I have very little doubt she would, if she got a chance."

"Have you heard her asking such questions?"

"Well, not exactly . . . not that I can quote. It would be much good asking that sort of question here. Besides, say, she covers them up."

"If she tried to murder Dr. Sambourne, which I take what you are suggesting," said Newte, "how do you account for her having been the person who in fact saved his life?"

The question plainly nonplussed Oman. "Perhaps only pretended to," he said, after a pause.

"You have no more positive evidence against her than you have given us?"

"Well," said Oman, "she snoops among people's papers. I've caught her at the doctor's, more than once."

"In the laboratory?"

"No, not actually. In his study. Not that I think she could learn anything of real importance from them."

"You mean they are too technical?"

"No, not that," said Oman. "Dr. Glück has quite enough chemical training to understand them."

"Then what do you mean?"

"In strict confidence, I mean that there is nothing of value to be got from them. I mustn't be quoted as saying this, you understand; but the plain truth is that, in my opinion, Dr. Sambourne's researches are all bunk."

"I'd heard the fellah was a crank," Welsh put in.

"In that case, Mr. Oman, why have you stayed here so long?"

"Oh, bread and butter. The job is well paid, and it has given me a chance to get on with my own work. But I am proposing to leave. I just can't stick it, after all this."

"You don't think your own work worthless, eh?" Welsh put in.

"Far from it. I believe I have made a very important chemical discovery. That is why I am proposing to leave here. I have no doubt I can get it taken up."

"Well, we needn't go into that," said the chief constable.

"Very nice for you, I'm sure. You aren't afraid Dr. Glück may have pinched your discovery?"

"Not at all. I am more careful than Dr. Sambourne."

"What has he been experimenting on?" Newte asked.

"You realise that may be important?"

"As I told you, I am afraid I don't feel in a position to disclose my employer's secrets. You must ask him that, when he is well enough, or ask Mr. Potts."

"Very good," Newte dropped the subject. "You spoke of the possibility of there being more than one criminal. Whom else do you suspect, besides Dr. Glück?"

Oman said promptly, "I suspect Dr. Aronson. I caught him only to-day—or rather yesterday—I forgot it was after midnight—in the laboratory behaving very suspiciously."

"Oh! What time was that?"

"It was early in the afternoon. Soon after lunch."

"What exactly was he doing?" the chief constable inquired.

"Oh, snooping around. I took him by the scruff of the neck and pitched him out of it."

"Snooping is a bit vague. Can't you be more explicit?"

Oman hesitated. "He had no business to be there at all," he said. "Only Dr. Sambourne and I are allowed to go into the laboratory, except Mudge to clear up, and then I go with him. The place is supposed to be kept locked, but Dr. Sambourne is always forgetting."

"You still haven't told me exactly what Dr. Aronson was doing."

"I'm not sure that I can. The main point, to my mind, was that he had no business to be there at all."

"Did you ask him what he was doing?" Newte said.

"Yes. He said he was looking for Dr. Sambourne."

"Isn't it possible that he was? I suppose he knew he was not allowed there, did he?"

"Oh, yes. He knew. He was terrified when I found him."

"Flinging him out by the scruff of the neck seems a bit violent, if I may say so, Mr. Oman," remarked the chief constable. "Wouldn't he have gone quietly?"

"I wanted to teach the little blighter a lesson."

"You don't like him?"

"I don't like any of them. I think they would all be much safer locked up."

"As to that . . ." the colonel began, and then said, "Any other suspects, Mr. Oman?"

"None in particular. That is, except Franck, who arrived to-day. It seems a curious coincidence that he should be an old friend of Eva Glück's. Besides, Ivens says he saw Franck signalling to her in the library."

"Ivens?"

"The Home Guard who came with Colonel Kennell."

"Signalling? In what way?"

"Well, making faces behind Kennell's back, to warn Dr. Glück about something. As if he were telling her not to give him away, Ivens said."

"You have no other reason for suspecting him?"

"How should I? I never set eyes on him till this evening."

"Do you suspect any one else?"

"I suspect all these refugees," Oman said coldly. "I have found it most unpleasant being in the house with them. I should have left sooner, but I had not completed my experiments."

"Did you mention your suspicions to any one?" Newte asked. "To Dr. Sambourne, for example?"

"No. It wouldn't have been the faintest use. He wouldn't have listened to me. But I can tell you this. Both Aronson and Rossini are in the habit of slipping out of the house at night after hours."

"You mean after the aliens' curfew? If you knew of that, it was your duty to inform the police."

"I was meaning to. I have been keeping a watch on them."

"Do you know where they went?"

"I followed Rossini over to Mr. Jolyan's place."

"Ah!" said Newte. "The Fascist."

"He was a Communist not so long ago," said Oman. "He is a very bad influence."

"Decent fellow, Jolyan, despite his habit of taking up with

one piece of nonsense after another," said Colonel Welsh. "Bit of an ass, but no real vice in him. At least, that's what I've always thought. My wife likes him."

"If you think so . . ."

Newte intervened. "Have you tracked either of them anywhere else?" he asked.

"Aronson goes to see Miss Buck sometimes."

"The evacuated dressmaker?"

"Yes. And he goes to the White Hart. They let him in the back way."

"After closing time, do you mean?"

"Yes. He steals out late at night."

"I suppose you are aware, Mr. Oman," said Newte, "that for an alien to break his curfew is a serious offence. It was your duty to inform us at once."

"I told you I was meaning to. Sorry, if I ought to have done it sooner."

"You certainly ought. Isn't this house locked up at night?"

"The front is . . . not the back. Dr. Sambourne won't have it locked, because of getting to and from the laboratory."

"Then any one can walk in and out as they please all night?"

"That is so. It is none of my doing. If I had my way, these foreigners would be all locked up somewhere really safe."

"Come, come, Mr. Oman," said Welsh. "Of course it is only right to be careful; but these poor people are refugees from Nazi persecution."

"That's what they say," Oman answered. "But there are wrong 'uns among them, you can be pretty sure of that."

"Very possibly," said Welsh. "But we had better not run off on the aliens question. You have nothing further positive to tell us, I take it. Of course we shall follow up what you have said. Eh, Newte?"

"Quite so, sir," said the inspector. "I'll see to it. Now, Mr. Oman, I want your story of what happened here this evening. As you know, we have heard what Mr. Potts had to say. Suppose we begin with Mr. Moggridge's arrival. Or is there anything before that you want to tell us?"

"I don't think so. You know about the rest of the Moggridges arriving with Mr. Potts in his car. We were in the middle of dinner when Mr. Moggridge turned up unexpectedly."

Newte took Oman over the ground of Rowland Moggridge's behaviour at dinner, and his subsequent collapse, after which

Oman and Potts had put him to bed. The second account of these incidents merely confirmed what George Potts had said.

"After you had put him to bed, what did you do next?" Newte inquired.

"I went down to Dr. Sambourne in the laboratory?"

"Was that by arrangement?"

"No. Just to see if he wanted me. He did, for a few minutes, to give me some instructions about to-morrow's work—I mean to day's. Then I left him, and went to my own room."

"Did he drink anything while you were with him?"

"No. You mean the beer. Not while I was there. But he often did take a glass during the evening. He kept the barrel there on purpose."

"Was that habit of his generally known? I mean, would most of the people in the house have known about the barrel being in the laboratory? They weren't supposed to go in there, were they?"

"No; but any of them might have seen the barrels being carried in and out. Besides, some of them did go in, despite orders. As I told you, I caught Aronson there early yesterday—and then Gurth Moggridge. The place is supposed to be kept locked, but Dr. Sambourne is always forgetting to lock it."

"Did you tell him when you found Aronson there?"

"No. I just gave Aronson a piece of my mind and kicked him out. I meant to tell the doctor, but it slipped my mind this evening."

"Hm. Did you remain in your room long after you left the laboratory?"

"No. A bit later, I found I needed a paper from the lab, so I went back to look for it. That was when I caught Gurth Moggridge. That was about half past ten, I think."

"What exactly was he doing?"

"Routing in the poison-cupboard. I suppose the doctor had left it open. He does that quite often. So I cursed him, and he ran away and I followed, meaning to cuff him soundly. And Mr. Potts was in the hall and tried to stop him. But he got away through the front door, and I thought it was no use chasing him in the dark."

"Did you know," asked Welsh, "that he had stolen the cyanide?"

"I should say not," Oman replied. "Or I should have chased him a good deal harder."

"When did you find out?"

"I went back to the lab. to look round. That's when I saw it was missing."

"What did you do then?"

"Hunted round a bit, in case it had got put in the wrong place. Then, when I couldn't find it, I came back into the house and ran into Kennell. He told me about the boy, and said Ivens had got the bottle back. I meant to ask Ivens for it; but then so many things happened that I forgot."

"Do you know where it is now?"

"The bottle? Hasn't Ivens handed it over?"

"No. It is lost again."

"Good Lord! I don't like the look of that one little bit."

"Nor do I," said Colonel Welsh. "Your job, Newte, to find that stuff as soon as you can get round to it."

Newte grunted. He was aware that time was passing, and much undone. "As soon as I can, sir," he said. "But I shall need more men—in the morning."

Colonel Welsh yawned. "I'm getting damned sleepy," he said. "Ought to phone the missus soon, or she'll be getting anxious. How many more of these people are you proposing to interview in the middle of the night, Inspector?"

"I think I've about done with Mr. Oman, for the present, if you have, sir," said Newte. "I really ought to see all of them, but . . ."

"Getting sleepy too, Newte? Don't blame you. Send 'em all to bed, my boy, and see the rest in the morning, when you're fresh."

"No sleep for me, sir. Too much to be done. But there's no reason why you shouldn't get off home."

"Something in that, Newte. Only I shall have to take the car."

Newte said that would be all right. They proceeded to the library, where the chief constable told the weary party assembled there that they could go to bed, but no one must attempt to leave the house. He then stumbled out to his car and drove away. Newte went slowly towards the laboratory and found Dr. Yorick there fast asleep in the one arm-chair. The doctor woke as he entered.

"Well, how's the patient?"

"Doing well, but I thought I'd better stop. Miss Philip is with him."

"Where are the others?"

"Dr. Glück has gone to lie down. She is coming back to

relieve Miss Philip later. The other German lady has gone to bed."

"That'll be Professor Meyerbeer's wife. Sorry I woke you up, Doctor. Just see nobody gets monkeying about in here if you can. I must go and find my sergeant upstairs. By the way, I thought Ivens was on guard here. What's happened to him?"

"He's gone home," said Dr. Yorick. "When I came in here, he was grumbling like anything about Colonel Kennell having told him he'd got to stop here, while he himself went off home to bed. Ivens said that, if I was proposing to be here, he didn't see that he was needed any longer, and off he went. I couldn't very well stop him."

"Have you been here ever since he left, Doctor?"

"Yes, except for slipping in occasionally to have a look at my patient."

"Has any one else been here since you came?"

Yorick said that a number had passed through, to or from the bedroom, or had looked in at the door, but that he was pretty positive no one had disturbed anything while he had been there. Newte, leaving him to snatch a little sleep, went wearily back into the house, in search of Sergeant Westinghouse.

5

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE AT HOME

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE, cold and tired, allowed himself a single whisky and soda before stealing quietly up to bed. He undressed and washed in his dressing-room, and then tiptoed into the adjoining bedroom. Emily Welsh heard him. "You're very late, darling. Come in and get warm." Colonel Welsh got in, snuggled up close, and within two minutes was fast asleep. Mrs. Welsh lay quiet for a little listening to his even breathing, and thinking to herself that, as a husband, he suited her very well, even if he was a bit of an ass. For Emily Welsh, as some of our readers know, was a lady in whom strong affections mixed with strong judgments, and the chief constable was still her white-headed boy.

Colonel Welsh woke late, in his own bed, and sat up suddenly. His wife was at her toilet-table. "Had no end of a time last night," he said. "Old Sambourne nearly murdered,

and another fellah quite so ; and no end of a pother. In the end I left Newte to it, and came home."

"Very much to Inspector Newte's relief, I don't doubt."

"Oh, come, love. Don't be so snooty. I do make myself of some use sometimes, whatever you think."

"Of course you do, darling. But not after midnight. Your brain always goes by then. Besides, Inspector Newte would much sooner be left to run the affair his own way, however helpful you were being."

"Well, I'm damned," said Welsh. "You know I always allow my fellahs an absolutely free hand. Always tell 'em to go ahead and not mind me."

"Yes, darling ; and then you ask all the questions yourself, and badger the poor creatures till they feel like murdering you. But, seriously, was somebody murdered ?"

"Yes. Fellah called Moggridge. No great loss, from all I hear."

"Not the husband of that abominable female ?"

"Yes. I remember you and Mrs. Moggridge didn't hit it off."

"She is the most insolent, interfering, empty-headed snob I ever encountered in my life," proclaimed Emily Welsh. "And she had two really detestable children. . . ."

"Has still. They're both up at Excalibur House, though I didn't see them. She and they were on a visit to Sambourne, and the husband seems to have gate-crashed unexpectedly, straight out of an inebriates' home. Shall I tell you the whole story, as near as I can get it straight ?"

"Not now, Hubert. I have to get down to breakfast. Afterwards, if you've time . . ."

"Shan't have. Ought to get back to Excalibur House presto. I'm damned late already." He flung back the bed-clothes and leapt out of bed.

"Rubbish !" said Emily Welsh. "You leave Inspector Newte to do his own job, and don't get excited. He's quite good, you've always told me, though he is such a death's head."

Welsh put on his slippers and dressing-gown. "I'm afraid, darling, this case'll be too difficult for him. It's the deuce of a muddle, with the house full of refugees and this Moggridge man getting himself killed twice over."

"Twice over ?"

"Yes. First someone poisoned the fellah with laudanum ; and then someone else came along and finished him off with

cyanide. That is, unless it was the same man. It's one hell of a muddle."

Emily Welsh knew her husband. He swore but rarely, except when he was really worried and puzzled. She said, "Darling, if that's how you feel about it, you ought to call in Scotland Yard."

"And how'll Newte like that?"

"If he's sensible, he will be pleased."

"Hell, woman! Do you suppose anybody's ever sensible? He'll say I'm insulting him."

"Then let him. He'll get over it. Besides, Harry Wilson hasn't been down here for ages, and I'm sure he needs a rest."

Colonel Welsh chuckled. "So that's it, is it, you abominable schemer? You want to get your old flame down here to flirt with, and so you tell me to go and pour insults on the unoffending Newte. You really are the most immoral female. But, in any case, there wouldn't be a chance of getting Harry to come down. He's much too high and mighty in these days, and up to the eyes besides. He'd only send some dunderhead of a Scotland Yard inspector, and I'd have to be polite to the fellah, as well as smooth down Newte."

"Harry could come if he wanted to. If you're writing to him, I'll slip in a note."

"Oh, will you? What you're doing is standing between me and my duty—which is to take a hot bath and be off to relieve Newte as soon as I can." The chief constable shuffled out of the room in the direction of the bath.

"He shall write to Harry," said Mrs. Welsh to herself. "Harry has neglected me abominably these last two years. I'll make him call in Scotland Yard. . . . Besides, he ought to. The idea of Inspector Newte solving anything! Or Hubert either, though he's not nearly such an ass as he sometimes seems. It would be nice to have Harry down here. I've been dreadfully dull lately. Oh, *damn* this war!"

6

QUEENIE MOGGRIDGE EXPLAINS

"I HAVE been wondering, Newte, whether we ought not to call in Scotland Yard."

Colonel Welsh was back at Excalibur House, whither he had gone after a brief talk at the police station with Superintendent Pigou. Newte had remained at Excalibur House all night, snatching a couple of hours' sleep on a sofa in the library. Mrs. Mudge, with many grumbles, had complied with Oman's order to serve an early breakfast for Dr. Yorick, Inspector Newte and the sergeant; and they had been joined by Mary Philip, who proposed to relieve Dr. Glück at Percy Sambourne's bedside as soon as she had eaten a little food. Dr. Yorick had given them excellent news of his patient, whom he regarded as almost out of danger—a wellnigh miraculous recovery due to Dr. Glück's presence of mind. A trained nurse was due at nine o'clock to relieve the amateurs, and Dr. Yorick felt safe in leaving in order to attend to his other patients.

Welsh, on his arrival, had found Newte, already reinforced by a detective-sergeant named Keynes, and a couple of constables, settling down to the labours of the new day. Newte looked fagged out, but he plainly intended to go on without allowing himself any further rest. Welsh said, "I have been wondering, Newte, whether we ought not to call in Scotland Yard."

The suggestion did not seem to improve Newte's spirits. He said, in a melancholy voice, "Of course, sir, that is just as you think best. I don't expect you think I am likely to make any head at this case, though I will do my best."

"Then you agree, do you?" said Welsh brightly. "That's splendid. I hoped you would."

Newte shook his head sadly. "If I may say so, sir, that is taking me up too fast. I did not say I wanted the Yard called in. I said it was as you thought best."

"And then you said you didn't suppose you could solve the thing. So I thought . . ."

"The question, sir, is, can any one hope to solve it? I was hinking less of my own unworthiness than of the very great difficulty of the case itself. Now, sir, as I see it . . ."

"That's what the Yard's for, isn't it, to handle the really difficult cases?"

"No, sir, I should not have said quite that. My view of Scotland Yard is that it should be called in when a case isn't local, so to speak, but requires investigation in a number of areas under different police jurisdictions."

"How do you know this doesn't? This house is a whole League of Nations in itself."

"No doubt, sir. But that was not what I meant. I have a feeling that all the clues are here, within these four walls, and no need to go running about to look for them."

"That ought to make it easier."

"Hardly, sir. There's plenty of haystack here to hide a needle in, without going further afield."

"Or a bottle of cyanide, eh? You haven't found that yet, I suppose?"

"As a matter of fact, sir, I have. It's been put back."

"Where?"

"In the laboratory cupboard where it came from. No finger-prints, either. It's been wiped."

"But wasn't the cupboard locked?"

"Yes, sir. And so it was this morning, Mr. Oman says, when he found it. But the bottle had been put back inside."

"It was Oman found it, was it? What about his having put it back himself? He had the key."

"I thought of that, sir, naturally. It may be the explanation. But it is not a difficult lock. Plenty of keys would open it."

"All the same . . . What do you make of Oman?"

"I don't trust him, sir, any more than you do. But I rather doubt whether he is the sort of man who would have put the bottle back and then come and told me, knowing that, as he had the key, the first suspicion was bound to fall on him."

"He might have, surely."

"Oh, yes. I'm not ruling it out. But it doesn't help, not by itself. Besides, can you suggest why Mr. Oman should wish to murder Mr. Moggridge? I can't."

"Hm! No, I admit that. But putting back the bottle wouldn't prove he was the murderer."

"It would prove he was a confederate, sir, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would. But there are several possible senses of that word."

"Quite, sir. It's all very obscure."

"Well, let's leave that. What's your immediate plan of campaign?"

"I was proposing to interview one by one all the people there was no time to question during the night. At the same time, I have put on Keynes to make a more thorough search both of the laboratory and of the Moggridges' bedroom. Westinghouse I have told he can go home for a rest. The ambulance is due any time to take the body to the mortuary; and, of course, there will be a lot of things to see to."

"Any chance of talking to Dr. Sambourne?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid not. Dr. Yorick forbids it absolutely. I was thinking of beginning with the boy."

"Yes. That does seem to be indicated. Well, Newte, you tackle it your own way for the time being, and don't let me interfere. I'll just stand by and consider a bit further before I decide about the Yard. Pigeon's for it, though, I ought to tell you. I saw him before I came on here."

Love of Superintendent Pigeon was not among Newte's emotions. Of course, the super would want to call in the Yard. Too lazy to handle a case himself, of course he would refuse to trust his subordinate. Newte's feeling against a summons to Scotland Yard hardened. He was grateful for the respite which the chief constable had given him, and eager to make as much of it as possible. He said, "That's very good of you, sir. I will do my best to justify your confidence."

"Hey! Steady on!" exclaimed the chief constable. "I've not made my mind up yet. But you'd better have in that boy and not waste time."

Instead of Gurth Moggridge there appeared his mother, to maintain that he was much too unwell to be interviewed. Queenie Moggridge herself was obviously all on edge. She had not been to bed until the small hours, having sat for some time after she had gone upstairs on her daughter's bed, alternately weeping and railing at her hard fate. This had ended, through sheer nerves, in her quarrelling with Patricia, whom she accused of being hard and selfish and unfeeling; and she had then betaken herself to Gurth's room—to find him fast asleep. She had waked him up, and had broken to him the news of his father's death—news which the boy had received stolidly, and then, when she upbraided him, with tears that bore no relation to grief for Rowland Moggridge. She had then decided, for no particular reason, that Gurth must be ill, and had waked up Patricia to attend to him. Only then had she returned to

Dr. Sambourne's own bedroom in the main part of the house which she had told Mary Philip earlier that she intended to appropriate, as her brother could clearly not be moved from the bedroom adjoining the laboratory.

Having no night clothes with her, as her luggage was still in the room in which her husband had died, she had lain down in her day-clothes. She slept a little, but woke early and feeling hungry, descended to the kitchen at an early hour in search of food. There she was somewhat refreshed by a verbal combat with Mrs. Mudge, who declared that, what with two lots of breakfasts demanded already, she had no time to prepare anything for any one else, and Mrs. Moggridge would please to get out of her kitchen. The two women then had a good set-to, through which Mrs. Mudge firmly maintained her position. In the end, Mrs. Moggridge herself foraged around and found herself some breakfast, to the accompaniment of a muttered commentary by Mrs. Mudge. She then bethought herself of her son, and, convinced that he ought to stay in bed, set to work to prepare breakfast for him also—to Mrs. Mudge's still greater annoyance. She got things ready and found a tray, which she carried up as far as the ground floor. There she met Signor Rossini, and promptly requisitioned his aid to transport the tray to Gurth's room. Rossini most politely did as he was bid; and Gurth refreshed himself with a hearty breakfast, and then demanded more, which his mother refused. At that point came a police constable, knocking at the door with a message that Inspector Newte wished to see Master Moggridge in Dr. Sambourne's study.

"He shall do no such thing," Queenie Moggridge answered. "My son is much too ill to be troubled. And you will kindly tell your inspector that I consider he has no right to make use of my brother's study."

But the police constable refused to go away, or to carry the message; and it ended with Queenie Moggridge going down herself, to give Inspector Newte a piece of her mind. She was taken a little aback when she found Colonel Welsh with him.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Moggridge," said the chief constable. "Sorry to be a nuisance, and all that. But we want a few words with your son."

Queenie repeated her piece about Gurth's state of health, but did not renew her comment on the occupation of Dr. Sambourne's study.

"Oh, come, come. We shan't do the boy any harm. He was well enough last night, by all accounts."

"He is in bed, and I mean to keep him there."

Mrs. Moggridge refused to budge from this position; and it ended in the chief constable saying that he supposed they would have to go and interview Gurth in his bed. Mrs. Moggridge continued to protest; but on this point she had to give way. The three of them went up to Gurth's room, but the boy had meanwhile profited by his mother's absence to dress hastily and disappear. Nor was he in his sister's room, which was empty.

Colonel Welsh, exasperated, proposed to make the best of a bad job by interviewing Mrs. Moggridge in place of her son. They trooped back to Dr. Sambourne's study.

"Now, madam," said Inspector Newte, the colonel having recited his usual formula about leaving the whole conduct of the case in his hands. "Now, madam, what I want to ask you first of all is what terms you were on with your husband." Newte would not have begun so brusquely, but his temper, like the colonel's, was wearing thin.

"I regard that question as impertinent," Queenie answered. "Poor Rowland and I were, of course, on excellent terms."

"You were not living together, I understand."

"Then you have been entirely misinformed. My husband had been away recently undergoing medical treatment at a . . . sanatorium. But I have yet to learn that such a thing can be spoken of as not living together."

"Your husband was in bad health?"

"He was. He was a martyr to internal trouble. He was . . . seriously unwell when he arrived here last night."

Colonel Welsh broke in. "Mrs. Moggridge, p'raps I'd better tell you, if you don't know it already, we don't think your husband was drunk when he arrived here last night—not ordinary drunk, I mean."

Mrs. Moggridge glared at him. "Certainly not," she said. "I have already explained that he was . . . unwell. He was a martyr to . . . internal trouble."

"That's what I mean, ma'am," said the colonel. "We're pretty clear he'd had his dose before he came in to dinner."

"I consider 'dose' to be a vulgar expression, Colonel Welsh, in such a connection."

"Good heavens, please don't keep on getting me wrong," said the chief constable. "When I said dose, I meant dose. I meant he'd already taken the poison."

"Taken the poison! Before dinner?"

Newte put in, "You may not know, madam, that opium poisoning in its early stages often produces symptoms indistinguishable from those of violent intoxication."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Moggridge. "Do you mean to tell me poor Rowland wasn't drunk at all?"

"We fancy not, madam. My own idea is that he drank the opium some time before dinner. As I think you know, we believe the opium to have been in the barrel of beer which was in Dr. Sambourne's laboratory. What I want you to tell us is whether your husband would have known that Dr. Sambourne kept beer there. You see, it seems possible that he visited the laboratory first, before coming to the front door. What have you to say to that suggestion?"

Queenie Moggridge seemed to have been so much taken aback as to have had all the light knocked out of her. She said, "I suppose he might have. He would know about the beer. He had been in the laboratory before, and my brother always keeps a barrel there. He might have gone there to look for my brother, and helped himself to a glass if he found the place empty."

"Or to more than one," muttered the chief constable. "But, I say," he added aloud, "in that case, wouldn't he have come in by the back way, instead of going round to the front door and knocking?"

"Not if he didn't want it to be known he had been helping himself," Newte suggested. "My idea, sir, is that he drank the stuff in the laboratory; and it began to take effect while he was walking round to the front. Of course, he may have stayed in the laboratory for some time." Newte turned to Mrs. Moggridge. "I take it, madam, I am correct in assuming that your husband's arrival here last night was a surprise to you, as well as to Dr. Sambourne?"

"It was a complete surprise. I supposed him to be in the sanatorium."

"Do you know for what purpose he came? Did he expect to find you here?"

"No. I am sure he did not. He expressed great surprise at seeing me. I suppose he came to my brother for advice."

"They were friendly?"

"Well—no. My brother is not a very friendly person. But he might have wished to see him."

"Were they on bad terms?"

"Oh dear, no. But they seldom met."

"Had they any business matters in common?"

"No, none. My brother did make an allowance for my husband's medical treatment. But I dealt with all that."

"Then I take it you do not know what matter your husband wanted to discuss with Dr. Sambourne. I believe he described it as 'most important business'?"

"Mosh 'portant bishnesh," muttered Colonel Welsh. Mrs. Moggridge heard him and glared.

"If you think this is an occasion for levity, Colonel Welsh . . ."

"Pardon, ma'am. Rude of me. It . . . it slipped out."

"Exceedingly rude."

"Sorry. I apologise. Carry on, Newte."

"After dinner, madam, I believe Mr. Potts and Mr. Oman put your husband to bed. Did you accompany them?"

"I did not. I was busy with my son, who was not at all well."

"I understand Mr. Moggridge was put to bed in your room. Did you go there at any time in the course of the evening—I mean before the body was found?"

"No. I did not. If I had, poor Rowland's life might have been saved, like my brother's."

"It did not occur to you, when Dr. Sambourne was found, that your husband might have been poisoned too?"

"Not for a moment. I thought . . ." Queenie Moggridge stopped short.

"Please understand I am trying to give you as little pain as possible. You merely thought Mr. Moggridge to be in a condition in which you had seen him often before? Is that right?"

"Yes. I suppose I ought to have . . . He seemed exceptionally cheerful."

"I do not see how you could possibly have guessed—at dinner-time, I mean. But the question I asked just now is very important. I want to be quite sure I have the answer right. You say you did not enter the bedroom at any time between dinner and the discovery by the chief constable of your husband's body?"

Queenie Moggridge replied with some heat. "I did not go there at all. I have told you that already."

"Very well. Where were you during the time in question?"

"Where was I? In my son's room for some time. Why do you ask?"

"One always has to check up on everybody's movements," Welsh put in. "No offence meant, ma'am. It's the common routine."

"But you did not stay in your son's room all the time?" said Newte. "I take it you were not there when he got up and dressed?"

"I was not. I went to look for my brother. But Mr. Oman said Mr. Potts was with him. I then went to that young woman's room, and made a few remarks to her."

"You mean Miss Philip. Were you with her long?"

"Not very. I gave her a piece of my mind about the wretched bedroom she expected me to sleep in, and then I went to the drawing room and read."

"That is on the first floor, is it not? What made you go there? I noticed that no fire had been lighted in there."

"I had to go somewhere, to escape from the extraordinary persons my brother insists on entertaining. The library was full of them; and Mudge was busy in the dining-room. My brother was talking to George Potts in his study. There was simply nowhere else for me to go."

"Were you alone all the time you were in the drawing-room?"

"Yes, except for a moment. That psychologist person, poked her nose in; but she went away at once."

"Ah! Dr. Glück. You remained in the drawing-room until when?"

"I could not say. Until I became too cold to endure it any longer. Then I went and sat in my brother's study, waiting for him. I forgot to say that, before then, I went to my son's room and found he was not there. I searched most of the house for him, because I knew he was ill and ought to be in bed, but I was not able to find him."

"Did you go into the laboratory at any time?"

"No. I dislike scientific smells."

"You did not look for your son there?"

"I have said that I did not go there at all."

"Then you stayed in your brother's study—till when?"

"Not very long. Only until I was disturbed by Mr. Oman. He came in and began to shuffle the papers on the desk. I walked out."

"You do not like Mr. Oman?"

"I dislike him intensely. I then returned to the drawing-room, and remained there until I was found by Colonel Kennell, who was searching for my brother. I proceeded

with him to the library, and we decided to organise a proper search. As you are aware, my brother was found in the laboratory building."

"I see," said Newte. "Now, Mrs. Moggridge, we come to the point on which I should value your candid opinion. Have you any idea of who could have wished to murder your brother?"

"Or my husband. It is he who has been murdered."

"Quite, madam. Let us say either of them."

"I have never trusted Mr. Oman. And, on principle, I distrust all foreigners—especially refugees."

"Let us take Mr. Oman first. What have you against him?"

"He is sly and underhand. He is rude. He makes insolent remarks to my brother, who is too wrapped up in his work to notice them. He behaves as if this were his house, and he were not merely a hired servant."

"Those are hardly motives for murder, are they?"

"It is your business, not mine, to find motives, I believe."

"Quite. But if you know anything that is likely to help us, it is your duty to tell us all you can."

"I have given you all the help I can. But in a house full of spies and enemies . . ."

"I was coming to the foreigners. Can you throw any light on them?"

"I prefer to keep entirely apart from such people. I refuse to sit in the same room with them—except at meals, when I cannot help it. And then I do not speak to them."

"Not even if they speak to you?" Welsh inquired.

"If I do have to speak, I answer so as to close the conversation in as few words as possible."

"Then you cannot help us about them?" said Newte.

"I can tell you that they are most unpleasant people. Miss Glück, for example . . ."

"Yes?"

" . . . holds forth at table on the most unsuitable subjects. Before the children! Sex. . . ."

"She made herself pretty useful last night," said the colonel. "So I'm told. Dr. Yorick said she saved Dr. Sam-bourne's life."

"That may be so. I prefer not to discuss her further. The Meyerbeers also are most unpleasant people. Their table manners are revolting. And the man called Aronson is

positively nauseating. I caught him endeavouring to make love to my daughter. That was during my last visit here."

"What action did you take?"

"I smacked him. It was effective."

"And the others? Dr. Rossini? Dr. Franck?"

"Of Dr. Rossini I know nothing. He was not here during my previous visits. He has at least the merit of not being German. Dr. Franck we met at the station yesterday. He helped with the luggage. I know no more of him."

"You have said nothing of Miss Philip."

"I have nothing to say. She also is new here. Except her bad behaviour about the bedrooms, I know nothing against her."

"Then it comes to this, madam. Apart from general dislike, you have nothing against any of these people?"

"I have a great deal against them."

"I meant, nothing bearing on your husband's death, or on the attempt on Dr. Sambourne's life."

There were more questions after that, but none to our purpose. Mrs. Moggridge swept out, declaring her intention of going in search of Gurth and putting him back to bed.

"What a woman!" said the chief constable when she had gone.

"I was just thinking I should have taken to drink if I'd married her," said Inspector Newte, gloomily and without the glimmer of a smile.

7

FEATURING GURTH MOGGRIDGE—DR. GLÜCK—DR. ARONSON

DETECTIVE-SERGEANT KEYNES found Gurth Moggridge up in the attics, and hauled him before Inspector Newte and the chief constable. Gurth was filthy, having been engaged on some game of his own in a place which had been long uncleaned. He was also evidently frightened, and disposed to be sullen.

"Come here," said Colonel Welch. "Look at me, boy and see you tell the truth to the inspector. It will be th worse for you if you don't."

Gurth said nothing. Inspector Newte said, "I want to know what you were doing in the laboratory last night." Gurth merely stared at him. "What made you go to t

laboratory? Come, I must have an answer." Gurth only began to cry.

"No harm will come to you, if you tell the truth," said Welsh. "That is, if you haven't done anything really wrong."

Gurth blubbered.

"Come now, pull yourself together," said the chief constable. "You went into the laboratory, and stole a bottle of dangerous poison. Why did you do it?"

"I . . . I didn't steal it," said Gurth.

"You ran away with it. What did you mean to do with it?"

"I didn't mean to do anything."

"Then why did you take it? Did you know what it was?"

Gurth said, "I knew nothing about it. I shouldn't have taken it, only Mr. Oman hit me."

"Because he found you meddling with the poison-cupboard. Why did you meddle with it?"

Gurth returned to silence.

"What made you get out of bed, and go downstairs at all?" said Newte.

"I didn't want to stop in bed. Mother is always putting me to bed. I wanted . . ." The boy stopped short.

"Yes? What did you want?"

"I . . . just wanted not to be in bed."

"Why did you go into the laboratory? You knew you were not allowed there, didn't you?" Gurth remained silent, and Newte went on, "You know it is very wrong to steal."

"I wasn't stealing."

They tried again and again; but they could get nothing out of Gurth Moggridge. Newte shifted to another question. Where had the boy gone after he had wriggled out of Franck's grasp in the drive? He had gone round the house and crept upstairs by the back way. After hiding for a time in the attics, he had taken refuge in his sister's room, and had remained there until his mother had found him.

"You're sure you didn't come downstairs again at all?" Gurth said he was sure.

"When you were in the laboratory, did you meddle with anything else beside the bottle you ran away with?" Newte inquired.

"I touched some of the other bottles."

"Did you do anything to the beer-barrel? You knew, didn't you, that there was a barrel of beer on trestles beside the cupboard?"

"I never touched it."

"You did not pour anything into it?"

"I never did."

"You took nothing away, except the one bottle?"

"No, I never. And that was only because Mr. Oman hit me."

"Have you seen that bottle since Dr. Franck took it from you last night?"

"No."

That was all they could extract from Gurth Moggridge, after many endeavours. The boy's manner remained sullen; but that might be only because he was frightened—nor was it in fact very different from his normal manner. In the end they let him go, with the question why he had been meddling with the poison-cupboard unanswered. Gurth did, however, assert stoutly that he had found the cupboard, as well as the laboratory itself, unlocked. On the whole, it seemed probable that there had been no real motive, beyond mere mischief, for his incursion, and that the running away with the potassium cyanide had been an accident, due to his having been interrupted by Oman. It remained possible that there was some more sinister explanation, and that Gurth had really meant to appropriate the poison. But it was doubtful whether he really had any notion of what the stuff was; and it seemed highly unlikely that he had repossessed himself of it after Ivens had set it down in the library. Someone had got hold of it then, and had used it to finish off Rowland Moggridge; but that someone could hardly have been the boy.

"Whom do you want to have a go at next?" Welsh asked the inspector when Gurth had been sent away. "At this rate, we shall be at it all day; and we don't seem to be getting anywhere. What about having a go at some of these refugees?"

"Would it suit you, sir, if I had in Dr. Glück?"

"Whom you please, Newte. It's in your hands."

Dr. Eva Glück was talkative. She was most anxious to tell them what she thought. But it came to nothing by way of evidence. She had been in the library the whole of the time after dinner. She had never entered the laboratory until she was summoned there to administer aid to Dr. Sambourne. She had not seen the bottle of cyanide which Ivens had put down in the library. She had immediately recognised the symptoms of opium poisoning, because she had received a medical training and had met with a similar case in Vienna in the course of her

psycho-analytical practice. She had not, however, suspected the truth about Moggridge's condition at dinner. It was, she asserted, impossible to tell the difference between inebriation and the early effects of opium poisoning on certain constitutions. She ought perhaps to have suspected something when Moggridge had passed so quickly from high excitement to near-insensibility, but that too had been quite consistent with certain forms of alcoholism.

Asked about her fellow-refugees, she became reticent. The Meyerbeers were very dull and stupid—typical Berliners. Aronson was an unpleasant type: she preferred not to discuss him. No, she had nothing definite against him—nothing that any one with eyes could not see for himself. Rossini she characterised as “one who thinks only of his own interests.” Franck, she said, she had known in Vienna; but as he had arrived after the crimes had been committed, there was no need to discuss him. “He iss, however, a vairy sharming man; and so honest and good as a great big baby.” It was plain that Dr. Gluck had a liking for Amadeus Franck—even a very strong liking.

“I say, Newte,” said Welsh suddenly, “there's **one** of these fellahs we've been clean forgetting. What's his name—Waters or something?”

“Ah! Professor de Wauters. He iss what you call the dark 'orse. He stalk about de 'ouse, and smile and smile, and say nozzing—only nozzing. But most of de time he stay in 'is own room.”

“What does he do there?” Newte asked.

“I think he sleep. He is a vairy lazy man.”

“Wasn't he on good terms with the rest of you?”

“Oh, but pairfectly. Professor de Wauters 'ave de most exquisite manners, and 'e never quarrel with nobody. He iss always most polite, and his politeness means nozzing.”

“You don't like him?” Welsh said.

“Pardon! I like him vairy well. If 'e choose not to vear 'is 'eart upon 'is sleeve, vy should I mind of that? I think 'e keep 'is life by 'imself. It would not suit me, because I am extrovert, as we are in Wien. But he iss—how do you call it?—one oyster.”

“We must have a good look at the fellah,” said Welsh.

“Where was he yesterday evening, do you know?”

“It vas fomy,” Dr. Gluck answered. “Poor man! He did lock 'imself up in 'is room, because Mrs. Moggridge did vish to steal it from 'im.”

"She wanted to steal his room? What d'you mean?"

"It iss de best bedroom. Professor de Wauters 'ave always de best of everyting. Mrs. Moggridge did tink it should be hers."

"So they had a row, eh?"

"Oh no. Professor de Wauters never 'as rows. 'E did steal away, saying nozzing, and did lock 'imself in his own room, so as to feel safe."

"Who told you all this?"

"He did tell me 'imself. He was amused."

"Oh, then he does talk sometimes?"

"To me, yes. But not to de ozzers."

So much they got from Dr. Glick. Or rather, they got much more, but not of relevance. They did not ask her whether it was true that David Onan had caught her meddling with Dr. Sambourne's papers, or attempt by their questions to probe into the roots of his other suspicions of the Viennese psychologist. All that would come later, if need arose. For the time being they sent her away, and summoned Dr. Aronson.

The little man was obviously in a panic—literally sweating with fear. Newte asked him first what he had to say about his late return on the previous evening, and whether he realised the seriousness of his breach of the regulations affecting aliens.

"I am ver' sorry," Aronson managed to say. "But it iss de first and de only time I 'ave offended, and I 'ope it vill be overlook."

"That's all very well," said Newte. "Sergeant Westinghouse tells me you lied to him about where you had been, and we have evidence that yesterday was by no means the first time you had been out late. What have you to say to that?"

"It is von lie," said Aronson. "It is true I do zometimes go out after dinner for von little drink at de inn in de village; but always, until it vas last evening, I 'ave returned before de clock do strike ten."

"So you say. You went to the White Hart last night, didn't you?"

"Dere is no 'arm in dat, is dere?"

"I'm not saying there is. The question is, where did you go after you left there?"

"I 'ave told de policeman dat I vent to call on a lady friend, but she vas not at 'ome."

"You said, I believe, that you called on her again later,

and that she would speak for you. She couldn't do that, unless you found her in."

"I . . . I vas make dat up," said Aronson. "Ven I vas frightened because de policeman say vere vas I ven de gentleman vas murdered."

"Then you maintain now that you met nobody after leaving the White Hart. Is that so?"

Aronson asserted vehemently that he had been entirely alone up to the time when he re-entered the house by the back way in the small hours. Newte asked him next for the name of the lady on whom he had paid his repeated but fruitless calls. Aronson was very reluctant to answer this question; but at last, under pressure, he said that the lady was a Miss Greta Buck.

"That is the dressmaker who was evacuated from London, and has set up for herself in Myrtle Cottage," said the chief constable. "That is the lady you mean, isn't it?"

Aronson said it was, and Colonel Welsh went on, "Is she an old friend of yours?"

Aronson said that he had become acquainted with Miss Buck only since he had been living at Excalibur House, but had found her a very charming lady who had been very kind to him. "You understand, gentlemen, dat I vas very lonely here, and it vas von great 'appiness to meet wit so kind and gracious a lady."

"Gracious goodness!" ejaculated Colonel Welsh. "I do believe the man's in love with her." He had a vision of Greta Buck's fat and middle-aged figure, waddling along the village street.

"It ces so," said Aronson excitedly. "I would vat you call propose to marry de good lady, but I could not find her at home, and I 'ave vandered about and returned to her 'ouse again and again in de 'ope dat I find her."

The chief constable asked with some amusement whether Aronson supposed the most appropriate method of proposing to a lady to be that of calling on her in the middle of the night.

"So late, no, I did not intend," Aronson answered. "But I did vant to go to her ven no one would see me. And, ven I 'ad—how you say?—screwed myself up to asking de question of her, I could not go away until I had received de lady's answer. So I try again, and den again. But I not find her, and so I 'ave to return mit nozzing done."

"You persist in saying that you met no one then?"

"Vat shall I say else? It is de truth dat I tell you."

"Well, I suppose we shall have to leave it at that for the moment," said Welsh. "I must tell you that we shall have to take very serious notice of your action in breaking your curfew, whatever your reasons may have been. But there are some further questions I have to put to you now. Mr. Oman tells us he discovered you meddling with things in the laboratory yesterday. What have you to say to that?"

"I was in dere, yes, for a moment; and Mr. Oman he trew me out before I could say von vord. But it is not true I meddle mit anything."

"You know you were not supposed to go there, did you not?"

Dr. Aronson shrugged his shoulders and gesticulated. "I did vish to speak to Dr. Zambourne. I was doing no 'arm, I tell you. I just go in to see if Dr. Zambourne was dere. It was Mr. Oman who did make great mountains out of nozzing."

"You are prepared to swear that you did not touch anything?" Welsh persisted.

"I touch nozzing. I go just into de laboratory, and Mr. Oman he creep up be'ind me, and he take hold of me and shake me like a dog de rat. And den he give me no chance to say nozzing, and he throw me out. He assault me. He is vere rude, unpleasant gauleiter. Dat is vat 'appened. Dere was nozzing more."

Newte reverted to the previous subject. "Tell me, Dr. Aronson, how soon after dinner was it you went out?"

"Quite soon."

"Then you must have been out for at least three hours."

Aronson said nothing. He only twitched miserably.

"A devilish long stroll—even if your explanation is to be believed," Welsh commented. "You can go now, Dr. Aronson, but we shall be wanting to talk to you again."

FEATURING THE MEYERBEERS—DR. ROSSINI—PROFESSOR DE
WAUTERS—DR. FRANCK

ARONSON was succeeded by the Meyerbeers, who were allowed to come in together. Their testimony was for the most part unenlightening. They had gone straight to the library after dinner, and had remained there, he reading and she knitting, until the arrival of Colonel Kennell and his prisoner. Dr. Glück had also been in the room most of the time; but Frau Meyerbeer said that she had at one point got up and gone out for a while—how long she could not say—and had then come back. Upon Kennell's advent, Meyerbeer had gone away to look for Dr. Sambourne, but had failed to find him. He had not been into the laboratory, as he knew he was not supposed to do so, but he had knocked at the door and received no answer. He had then retired to his own room, after telling Mary Philip, whom he had met in the course of his quest, that someone was looking for Dr. Sambourne and that he did not know where he was. She had promised to look herself, and he had preferred his own room to going back to the men in uniform to report his failure. He had emerged later, when Dr. Glück had knocked at his door and told him Dr. Sambourne was still lost. He had then joined the others on their way to the library.

At this point Frau Meyerbeer was encouraged by her husband to tell her part of the story. She, like Ivens, had noticed the grimaces made by Franck at Dr. Glück, and had interpreted them as signals to the psychologist to be careful about what she said. Frau Meyerbeer plainly disliked Dr. Glück, and had also taken a dislike to Franck, probably in part because he was Dr. Glück's friend, but also, from the way she spoke of him, because she disliked Austrians in general, and Austrian refugees in particular. Professor Meyerbeer tried to shut his wife up when she began to air her own opinions, which, as we have seen, were those of the old Prussian aristocracy and very nearly as anti-Semitic as Hitler's. But enough was said to make them perfectly plain.

Thereafter, Frau Meyerbeer had been in attendance for some hours on Dr. Sambourne. Professor Meyerbeer, after lending his hypodermic syringe for Dr. Glück's ministrations, had gone to bed, as late nights disagreed with him, and his

wife had joined him as soon as she could be spared from the sickroom, where Mary Philip and Dr. Glück had arranged to take turns at watching after the crisis was over.

Colonel Welsh brought the questioning back to another point. Had Frau Meyerbeer, while she was in the library, noticed Ivens put down the bottle of poison which he had taken from Gurth Moggridge, or had she seen the bottle after it had been put down? She answered that she had not seen it at all. Professor Meyerbeer also denied that he had at any time seen the bottle.

Colonel Welsh dismissed the Meyerbeers; and then he and Inspector Newte sent for Dr. Rossini. Rossini, too, it will be remembered, had been out of the house for a period during the previous evening. He had come in by the back way while Kennell, Franck and Ivens were waiting in the hall immediately after their arrival, and had gone to look for Oman or Miss Philip in order to tell them that Franck had come and arrange for him to be given some dinner. But he had not returned from this quest until he came into the library with the others.

"I think, Dr. Rossini, you are an Italian?"

Rossini agreed, but explained volubly that he had been for many years an exile from his own country. He had lived in Paris, where he had practised his profession as a civil engineer, in charge of squads of Italian labourers working on French contracts. He had remained in Paris right up to the German occupation, and had then escaped in the nick of time to Portugal, where he had been until a few months before. Finding it impossible to get work there, he had finally taken a job as second engineer on a steamship, and had been torpedoed on the way to England. Rescued, he had been brought to a British port and interned, but had been released by the efforts of his numerous English friends, and had been quartered on Dr. Sambourne through one of the societies which undertook the care of refugees.

All this Rossini related with many gestures, in his voluble broken English. Inspector Newte tried once or twice to restrain his garrulity; but Colonel Welsh signed to him to let the Italian talk in his own way. At length there was a pause.

"You came in, Mr. Rossini," said Newte, "at about half past ten last night. Where had you been?"

"To the village. To see a friend."

"I understood you told Colonel Kennell you had merely been out for a walk."

"He did not ask me if I have been to visit any person

So I not tell him. Why for shall I tell him if he not ask me ? "

"I'm not saying you should have. Do you mind giving me your friend's name ? "

"It is necessary, yes ? " Rossini asked. " I do not wisha to embarrass de lady."

"I'm afraid I must have the name."

Rossini made a gesture of assent. " 'Er name is Bloggia," he said. " Anna Bloggia."

"How do you spell that ? " Newte asked.

"BLODGER," Welsh put in. " I know the lady. Don't love her."

"Who is she, sir ? "

"Keeps a sort of an old junk shop for tourists. Or did. Pretty well out of action now. Good looking party, but fast."

"Mees Bloggia is my vere good fren'," said Rossini excitedly. " I vill not hear her spoken of so."

"All right, all right," said Welsh. " Don't get excited. You'll check up on that, Newte. When did you go out, Signor Rossini ? "

"After dinner. At once. I was late already."

"You did not go to see any one else besides Miss Blodger ? "

"No."

"You sometimes do go to see Mr. Jolyan, don't you ? "

"I have been to see him, yes. Why for not ? He loves my beautiful Italy."

"But you didn't see him last night ? "

"I have said not."

"Were you in the laboratory at any time yesterday ? "

"No. I have never been in de laboratory. I did understand it was not welcome for de visitors to go dere, and I not go."

Asked whether he could throw any light on the events of the previous evening, Dr. Rossini denied all knowledge, and they sent him away. "Who's next on the list ? " Welsh inquired.

"Professor de Wauters."

"Then have him in now."

De Wauters entered—a tall, dapper figure. He made a bow as he came in, and sat down, carefully smoothing his clothes and adjusting his tie.

"You are German, are you not ? " Newte began.

"Pardon. You are altogether mistaken. I am of the Netherlands."

"Sorry, sir. I thought everybody here was an enemy alien."

"I believe," de Wauters answered, "we are allies, my dear inspector."

"Er . . . yes . . . I suppose so." Newte did not seem wholly to welcome the idea. "Well, Professor, we want you to tell us whatever you know about these unfortunate affairs."

"But I know nothing. Not until this morning did I hear of them. Then I descend to my breakfast, and there is no breakfast. And I ask why there is no breakfast, and they tell me because there has been murder done in the night. And I, gentlemen, was asleep, knowing nothing of these terrible doings."

"I understand you went to your room last night immediately after dinner and locked yourself in. Was that your usual procedure?"

"To go to my room, yes. I prefer solitude, with my books and my pictures. To lock myself in, no. But for that I had reason. Dr. Sambourne's sister appeared to covet my humble apartment"—de Wauters smiled—"and I was unwilling to vacate it save at Dr. Sambourne's desire."

"So you locked the door, eh? Did you stay there all the evening?"

"Yes, except that I went for a moment to the bathroom and lavatory before going to bed."

"What time was that?"

"Half-past ten. I retired early, and read in bed."

"You were not disturbed?"

"I heard noises, and twice persons knocked at my door inquiring for Dr. Sambourne. I replied that I had him not within and knew not where he was, and they went away. It did not occur to me that anything serious had happened."

"Then you knew nothing at all about yesterday evening? Were you in the laboratory at any time yesterday?"

"I have never been in the laboratory. Such things do not interest me. I am an artist."

"Then I think that is all."

"I may go?" De Wauters rose, bowed, again adjusted his tie, and retired smiling.

"Queer fellow, Newte," said the colonel. "Deep, or might be."

"I'm not crossing him off, sir," Newte answered. "Not yet."

"Whom does that leave still to see?" Welsh asked.

"Dr. Franck, Miss Philip, Miss Moggridge, and the Mudees."

"A hell of a lot! And we aren't getting anywhere, so far. Or are we?"

"I am afraid not, sir. Very complicated case."

"Too many people about. That's the trouble. Might have been any of 'em, as far as I can tell. Well, better get on with it. Finish off the foreigners while we're at it."

Dr. Amadeus Franck came in, looking very large indeed. He sat down, clasped his hands together in front of him, and stared squarely at the inspector. In answer to questions, he agreed that he was an Austrian recently released from internment, and added that he had been a University Lecturer in Philosophy at Vienna before the troubles. He also volunteered that he was an old friend of Dr. Glück's, having known her well in Vienna in connection with her psychological work.

As Franck had not reached Excalibur House until nearly half-past ten on the previous night, it was unnecessary to discuss with him the earlier events of the evening. Nor did Newte think it necessary to go into the charges which Colonel Kennell had preferred against Dr. Franck. He began with the capture of Gurth and the seizure from him of the bottle which he had removed from the laboratory. Frank described how he had taken the bottle from the boy, and had subsequently handed it to Ivens after Gurth's escape. He was asked whether he had seen it since.

"Yes. I saw Mr. Ivens put it down on a shelf in the library—just inside the door. But when I looked for it later had gone, and I assumed he had picked it up again."

"Oh, you looked for it, did you? When was that?"

"When the English people left the library to seek for Dr. Sambourne, and we foreigners only remained. I looked for it then, but it had been removed."

"You did not see who took it?" put in the colonel.

"No. I have said that I thought the Home Guardist had taken it."

After the finding of Dr. Sambourne, Franck had been busy a long time in the bedroom leading off the laboratory. When at last he had been relieved, and Dr. Sambourne had been put to bed, he had set off to look for his own bedroom, which Dr. Glück had told him where to find. He had discovered his luggage on the first landing, and had taken it up with him to the second floor, where he was to sleep in a room at the back of the house, next door to Dr. Aronson's. He had entered the room and deposited his luggage, and had

go to bed when he had remembered that Dr. Glück had asked him to return Professor Meyerbeer's hypodermic syringe, which the diabetic professor would need when he got up. He had accordingly gone along the passage towards the Meyerbeers' room on the same floor at the front of the house, which also he had been told where to find. He had heard a violent altercation going on inside the room, and had at first hesitated to interrupt it. He had, however, finally knocked at the door, causing a sudden silence. Professor Meyerbeer, in his night-shirt, had come to the door and opened it a little, seeming very flustered. He had received the syringe and shut the door sharply. Franck had then gone back towards his own room, passing on the way Sergeant Westinghouse, who was prowling in the corridor, and thereafter he had unpacked and gone to bed.

So much for Franck's story, which was ordinary enough. But Franck seemed to have no desire to go away when he had told what he had to tell. He began asking questions of Inspector Newte. He expressed the hope that the missing bottle had been found. Newte looked at him heavily, and said that the police had matters in hand.

"Ah, then you have not found it? That is bad. It is not good that such a thing should be in unknown hands. You have inquired of Dr. Rossini?"

"Why him in particular?"

"He was standing for some time near where Mr. Ivens had placed it. He and Mr. Oman were the two nearest the door. Either could probably have taken it without being noticed."

"Do you mean that none of the others could have done so?" Colonel Welsh asked.

"Not so easily. The others came well into the room, while Mr. Oman and Dr. Rossini remained near the entrance. What do you know of the gentleman who calls himself Dr. Rossini?"

"What do you?" said Welsh. "Are you suggesting it isn't his real name?"

"I know nothing of him," Franck answered. "But I would like to know more."

"You're hinting at something. Out with it, man."

"Pardon. I merely ask you to discover all you can of Dr. Rossini. I know nothing about him."

"Mph!" said the colonel. "You foreigners are a suspicious lot. All been tellin' me you suspect one another."

"But is it not natural?" Franck cried. "In Europe, in these days, all suspect all. It is a part of the beastly system

to make it so. And conditions are difficult for us in England too. There are spies also among those who call themselves refugees. How should it not be so? How long has Dr. Rossini been in this country?"

"We aren't answering questions: we're asking 'em," said Welsh.

"It is no matter. But I do entreat you to study carefully Dr. Rossini."

They sent Franck away. "Well," said the chief constable, "I wonder what's his little game. He's got it in for Rossini, anyway, and I guess he knows a bit more than he said."

"If he does, he'll tell us," Newte said. "I should size him up, sir, as a man who can't keep his mouth shut."

"So much the better. You might put through inquiries about Rossini up in London, Newte. In fact, you'd better ask about the whole lot of them. But I guess the Home Office people must think they're all right, or they wouldn't be at large."

"I'll see to it, sir," said the inspector. "That's all the refugees—which leaves Miss Moggridge, Miss Philip and the judges still to be seen."

"I think I'll leave the rest of 'em to you, Newte. Got other things to do. Carry on with it, and I'll be over again in the course of the afternoon."

"Wants his elevenses," Newte muttered morosely, when his superior had gone. He sighed wearily. "Well, I'd better set on with the job. At any rate, he's said no more about dwelling in Scotland Yard."

9

FEATURING PATRICIA MOGGRIDGE—MARY PHILIP—MRS.
MUDGE—MUDGE

PATRICIA MOGGRIDGE's evidence amounted to precisely nothing that the reader does not already know. She was an attentive and supercilious witness, but she did not take much of the inspector's time.

Mary Philip came next. She was evidently in a state of considerable distress, but she told what she had to tell simply enough. It was not very much. Newte examined her at some length about the state of affairs in the house, and had no difficulty in discovering that the person whom she cordially

hated was David Oman. In speaking of her employer she was more guarded, but what she did say went to confirm Oman's suggestion that Dr. Sambourne was to be regarded as a harmless crank rather than as a serious research worker. Mary saw the impression she was making, and tried to take it back.

"Of course," she said, "I know nothing of his experimental work, that he does with Mr. Oman. I only do his other work; and all I meant was that I do really think his views about finance are rather silly. His scientific work may be marvellous, for all I know, even though Mr. Oman makes fun of it."

Her words did not alter the impression she had conveyed. Rather, they made Newte think that Sambourne must be an exceedingly foolish person, if even this chit of a girl could see through what he wrote.

Newte went on to ask her about the refugees. Mary said, "I'm really awfully sorry for the poor creatures. It must be horrible for them to be bottled up here together, feeling perfectly useless, and with nothing really to do. It's no wonder they quarrel."

"They do, then? Who quarrel most?"

"The Meyerbeers. He's an inveterate old grumbler, and thinks no one pays him proper deference. She's a curious mixture. She's a violent anti-Semite, though her husband is supposed to be partly a Jew, which she says he isn't. She's also a strong Conservative, whereas Dr. Glück is a Socialist, and Professor de Wauters calls himself a Philosophic Anarchist, whatever that means. Dr. Aronson's some sort of a Socialist too, I believe."

"And Dr. Rossini? What's he?"

"I really don't know. He hates Mussolini; but, apart from that, he doesn't say much about politics. But I was telling you about Frau Meyerbeer. The other side of her character is that she detests dirt. She's the perfect German housewife, and the state of the house absolutely shocks her. She is always trying to clean up, and having rows with people because she will go into their rooms and clean them. Dr. Glück detests having her room cleaned. And Mr. Oman had a dreadful row with her when he found her tidying his papers."

"And Dr. Franck?" Newte asked. "What about him?"

"He only came last night, you know. But he seems very nice and friendly. Only I'm sure he will quarrel with Frau Meyerbeer, because he seems to share her passion for tidying things up, and he's certain to want to tidy them a different

way. He caught me this morning, and proposed to begin rearranging all the furniture, so as to make the house look nicer."

"I can't have that," said Newte. "Not till I've done with it."

"Oh, I told him he mustn't, because Dr. Sambourne wouldn't like it at all. But most of the things he suggested did seem to be improvements."

"You tell Dr. Franck to mind his own business," said the inspector. He's a . . . busybody. That's what he is."

Mary Philip laughed. "I expect he's only bored with having nothing to do."

Last came the Mudges—both together. Mrs. Mudge began talking the moment she was inside the door. "How you expect me to cook the lunch if you send for me at twelve o'clock I'm blest if I know, Mr. Newte. But the way Mudge and me are put upon in this house, we're used to it. And if the lunch is ruined, it won't be my doing; and I shan't break my heart over it, not as long as I can get the master a little bit of something as he'll fancy, because the master does appreciate my cooking, and I tell you, Mr. Newte, there isn't a better cook than I am this side of Jericho, not when I'm let alone, which I never am, what with Mudge wanting 'elp with the housework, which is too much for him, and all these furrin persons expecting to be waited on as if they were lords and ladies, instead of a pack of beggarly refugees that haven't a shirt to their backs, and lives on the master's charity, which they wouldn't for long, not if I had my way, because I'd bundle every one of 'em out double quick, or my name ain't Martha Mudge, which it is since I married Mudge, having been as you may very well know Collins when I was a lass."

Mrs. Mudge paused to take breath, and Inspector Newte intervened.

"Time is valuable, Mrs. Mudge, and I want you to come to the point. I think you were in the kitchen all last evening, were you not?"

"In the basement I was, with Mudge or without him, and me not knowing more than a babe unborn about the poor master being murdered till that sister of his come a-shouting out for hot coffee and lots of it, and I sez to her what does she want coffee for at that time of night, because it wasn't my work to go making coffee for the likes of her at all hours, and

I'd thank her not to come blatin' at me with her high-and-mighty, hoitytoity manners, and when she said the master was lying upstairs as good as dead you could 'ave knocked me down with a fevver, you could, and me 'and trembled that I couldn't hardly pour the coffee into the saucepan, but it was good strong coffee and hot and it's the blessing of heaven it done the master good, and pleased to do it, for him, poor gentleman, because he is a gentleman when all's said and done, not like some folks I could name, and though not quite right in his head."

"Did you come upstairs at all in the course of the evening, Mrs. Mudge?"

"I did not. I heard a lot of trapesing about, and a pack of 'em came down into my kitchen and ask have I seen the master, and I says, not dreaming anything was wrong, did they suppose I'd got him in the saucepan, I says, because he wasn't anywhere else, they could see for themselves, and the master too much of a gentleman to be coming into the kitchen when he wasn't wanted, not like that nasty sneaking Mr. Oman. And before that that Miss Chuck, she came down and tells me a tale about that foreigner that came last night not 'aving 'ad any dinner, and I says to 'er, if he wants dinner, I says, you can blooming well get it for 'im, because I can't be getting dinners and whatnot, at all hours, or where'll I be; and bless me if she didn't take me at my word and go into my larder and hunt around till she made up a tray, and I so took aback I could only follow her around and offer a few remarks, which she didn't seem to notice, having the cheek of a Jezebel, which I don't doubt her being, leastways in her young days, which is long past."

"Then you can tell me nothing about what happened upstairs?" Inspector Newte managed to say.

"That's a fact," said Mrs. Mudge, "and nor can Mudge neither, because he was saying to me as we was on our way upstairs 'ow 'e was took aback and had no idea who the murthering brute was, though with so many to choose from it ought not to be difficult to find somebody to hang, and a good riddance whichever it was. But Mudge was saying . . ."

"Mudge had better say it for himself," Newte shouted her down.

"Bless you, Mudge don't say nothing for himself in company. He says to me when we got married, 'Now, Martha, you're a rare one to talk, and I ain't much in that line. So just you feed me proper, and you can talk the 'ind leg off any

donkey you please.' And the longer me and Mudge was married, the quieter he gets, so as it's rare 'ard to get a word out of 'im edgeways in these days, so to speak. No, Mr. Newte, Mudge don't know nothing, and he wouldn't know how to tell you it if he did."

When it had become abundantly clear that there was no prospect of getting a word out of Mudge, even edgeways, as long as Mrs. Mudge remained in the room, Inspector Newte firmly dismissed the lady, much to her chagrin, and ordered Mudge to stay behind.

"Well, Mudge," he said, "I understand that last night you brought up a cup of black coffee for Mr. Moggridge to drink at dinner. Is that right?"

Mudge nodded.

"Who told you to do that? Did Dr. Sambourne?"

"No."

"Or Mrs. Moggridge?"

"No."

"Well, who did, then?"

"None of 'em."

"It was your own idea, was it?"

"Martha's."

"Oh, Mrs. Mudge suggested it, did she? How did she come to know about Mr. Moggridge's condition? She was downstairs in the kitchen, wasn't she?"

That question, being unanswerable with more words, Mudge seemed to fancy using, gave some trouble. At last he was dragged out of him that Mrs. Mudge had been in the kitchen carrying away some of the dinner things, when Moggridge arrived, and had seen the condition he was in. She therefore prepared the coffee on her own initiative, and given it to Mudge to take up when he visited the kitchen with a further supply of dirty plates.

That seemed reasonable enough, and Newte saw that in any case, if the point needed pressing further, it had better be taken up with Mrs. Mudge. He said to Mudge, "In your position, I suppose you are about all over the house a good deal at all hours of the day?"

Mudge gave a grunt, which appeared to indicate assent.

"And you keep your eyes open? Now, last night, when did you last see Dr. Sambourne?"

Mudge appeared to find difficulty in answering. At length he said, "A didn't."

"You saw him at dinner?" Mudge nodded. "Do you

mean you did not see him again afterwards ? " Mudge nodded again. " Not at all ? " " No," said Mudge.

" Where were you, after dinner ? "

" Clearing."

" In the dining-room ? And then, where ? "

" Kitchen."

" All the time ? "

" No."

" Where, then ? "

" About the place."

" Yes, but where ? "

" Just about."

" Did you go at all to the laboratory ? " Mudge shook his head.

" Or to the library ? "

" No."

" Then where did you go ? "

" About," said Mudge.

" What I want to know," Newte persisted, " is whether you saw anything that could throw any light on the murder, or on the attempt on your master."

" No," said Mudge.

" Where were you when the house was searched for Dr. Sambourne ? "

" Just about."

" Did you join in the search ? "

Mudge shook his head.

" Why not ? "

Mudge remained silent, scratching his head.

" I said, why not ? "

" Jest didn't," said Mudge. " No affair of mine."

" What did you do then ? "

" Bed."

" You went to bed. Didn't you get up again when you heard what had happened ? "

" Didn't," said Mudge.

" Didn't what ? "

" Hear."

" Your wife didn't tell you ? "

Mudge uttered his first real sentence. " A doan't listen to 'er when I'm in bed. I sleeps," he said morosely.

Newte gave it up. " Then you can't help me," he said.

" No," said Mudge.

V. ENTR'ACTE

Inspector Newte's Notebook is reproduced here in order that the reader may have an opportunity, if he so desires, of reviewing the evidence and arriving at his own conclusions at this stage. Readers who do not fancy this type of exercise are at full liberty to omit the Notebook and proceed immediately to the next section.

I

FROM INSPECTOR NEWTE'S NOTEBOOK

I. Dr. Percy Sanbourne. Seems to be a crank. Oman (research assistant) and Mary Philip (secretary) both seem to regard his research work as valueless. But it might be regarded as important by enemy agents (Oman's evidence). Exact nature not yet ascertained (ask Potts). S. clearly supposed he had made, or was on point of making, important chemical discovery (letter from Potts, etc.). Business dispute with Potts over bank overdraft (Potts's evidence). Has cranky scruples against overdrafts and hostility to bankers (Potts, Mary Philip).

Seems to be rich (see Lawyers—Cottle, Keats and Lloyd—Mr. Keats—Potts to telephone Keats). Heirs believed to be Mrs. Potts and Mrs. Moggridge (sisters), probably in equal shares. No confirmation of this. Possible motive here; but none for murder of Rowland Moggridge.

Seemed quite well at dinner. This need not be inconsistent with his having already taken the poison. Dragon and Yorick agree about this. Both say *great* difference between individuals both in effects of laudanum poisoning and in time within which effects become apparent. This leaves time of actual poisoning a very open question. There is no doubt the laudanum was in the beer barrel. Full result of analysis will come to hand later, but Dragon is prepared to say so much now as certain. Poison in glasses nearly drunk by Chief Constable and Colonel Kennell and in dregs in dirty glass found in lab. When was poison put in barrel? (deal with this lower down).

Cannot be questioned at least for several days (Yorick firm on this point, and no good arguing). Unlikely he can help much about actual mechanism of crime, but may be very useful as to motive.

S.'s carelessness well established. In habit of forgetting lock laboratory (Oman and others). Often left poison cupboard unlocked (Oman). Probably casual in making poison book, unless this was left to Oman (see Oman at this). Nobody except S. and Oman supposed to go into lab or Mudge (accompanied by Oman) to clean up. But S. did let visitors into the lab. (Potts, perhaps Moggridge) on previous occasions. Also, others did get into lab. (e.g. Aronson, Gurth Moggridge on Saturday), and, of course, others on after discovery of first crime. Note easy access to laboratory either from house or without entering house. Entrance overlooked by back rooms only (see plan of house).

S.'s movements. Was in lab. until went upstairs to change trousers about 6.45 and to have bath. Chemicals spilt trousers (? any significance). Movements thereafter up to 7.30 unknown. May have remained upstairs or come down again to lab. or study before dinner. Held forth at length at dinner (this was apparently quite normal). Seemed surprised at Moggridge's arrival. Drank beer at dinner (? anything else). There was port on the sideboard. (Ask Mudge.) Went to laboratory after dinner, and was there with Oman until 9.30. But Oman went after dinner with Potts to put Moggridge to bed, and cannot have been with S. in lab. until after this. Was S. alone in lab. over this period, or where was he? (inquiries needed here). Nothing known of S.'s movements between 9.30 and 10 p.m., when Potts went to him in study, and had business altercation, which he does not seem to regard as serious (have to wait for S. himself to throw further light on this). Potts with him only a few minutes (Potts). S. not known to have been seen subsequently until found in lab. at about 11.15.

Possible motives. Money (Potts and Mrs. Moggridge as far as known). Theft of invention, or something connected with invention (this is an open field). Something arising out of entertainment of refugees (here, so far, groping in the dark pending further information about refugees. Make inquiries of H.O.). Accident, I think, can be ruled out. Suicide seems inconsistent with putting the poison in the barrel.

2. *Rowland Moggridge*. Husband of Dr. S.'s elder sister. Habitual drunkard, apparently supposed to be in inebriate home. Formerly civil servant (in H.O. ? Make inquiries of H.O. about record). Retired on account of drink. Did not live with his wife. His appearance at dinner apparently unexpected by every one, including S. and Mrs. M. Arrived at dinner

seemingly very drunk—cheerful and excitable. No one seems to have suspected he was anything except drunk. (N.B. No doctor present, but Eva Glück appears to have some medical knowledge. ? tackle her further about this.) Dragon and Yorick agree that *in some individuals* laudanum poisoning produces at one stage symptoms superficially identical with those of drunkenness, and that M.'s behaviour, as so far reported, squares with this. So does his subsequent collapse, which would be the normal next reaction after his phase of excitement.

Possibility cannot be ruled out that M. at dinner *was* drunk, in ordinary sense, and had not yet been poisoned. But, if so, when did he drink the laudanum? (as he was put to bed immediately after dinner, and there is no reason to suppose he got up again). May, of course, have been *both* drunk *and* poisoned, in view of his known habits—i.e. may have *arrived* drunk and then been poisoned. (It may be necessary to try and trace his earlier movements, before he reached Excalibur House. Time of his arrival not yet established, as he may have arrived some time before he knocked at the front door, and must have done so, if he had then already taken the poison. Rule out as fantastic the notion he may have taken the laudanum elsewhere than at Excalibur House.)

Or am I wrong there? Could M. himself have put the poison in the barrel? No, surely that makes nonsense. Rule it out, for the present at any rate.

M. was put to bed by Potts and Oman immediately after dinner. We know no more of him until he was *heard* snoring through bedroom door (by Mary Philip, when she was looking for Dr. S.) at about 10.45. (Is this time right? Confirm if possible.) Then nothing known until body found by Chief Constable and Colonel Kennell well after midnight. (Again try to confirm exact time.)

M. actually killed by dose of potassium cyanide; but Dragon practically sure he would have been killed by the laudanum without this, in view of the time he had been left unattended. Dragon says no doubt he was still alive when the cyanide was administered. Of course, if he had been found at or near the same time as Dr. S., and the same measures had been taken, he too might have recovered. But this does not follow, as susceptibility to opium poisoning differs greatly from one individual to another. Fairly safe to assume he would have died of the laudanum, unless he had been found much sooner than he actually was (except, of course, by the

person who administered the cyanide). Condition of body when found showed effects of both types of poisoning. The cyanide would have acted very quickly, but Dragon unable to say how long before he was found he had taken it. Dragon also unable to say more about time of taking the laudanum than that it was several hours before his death.

How was the cyanide taken? Dragon says certainly in liquid form, and thinks probably by hypodermic injection. Puncture in left forearm suggests this. This, of course, raises the question of the syringe. Prof. Meyerbeer's syringe was used for Dr. Glück's operations on Dr. S. Was it also used to poison M.? (Try to trace what happened to syringe after—or? before—Dr. Glück used it on Dr. S.) Were there other syringes in the house? (Dr. Yorick presumably had one in his outfit. Ask him about this.)

Cyanide stolen from lab. was in crystals, but Dragon says these easily soluble in water or almost anything. It seems pretty certain murderer used this supply of cyanide. This suggests murder of M. (by the cyanide) unpremeditated, as murderer could not have known Ivens would put down bottle in library, or indeed that G.M. would steal it from lab. (It is, however, possible that the murderer had taken the cyanide he wanted from the bottle in the lab. before it was stolen by G.M.—in which case murder *was* premeditated.)

Plausible assumption is that M. went to laboratory *before* he arrived at the front door. Did he arrive there alone, find lab. empty, and pour himself glass of beer from (already poisoned) barrel? If so, at what time? (Exact time may be important.) Only *one* dirty glass found in lab. (seen there by Chief Constable soon after his arrival.) Was this the glass drunk out of by M. or by Dr. S.? Or did they drink (at different times) out of the same glass? If two glasses, what happened to other one? (Of course, whoever drank the later could easily have rinsed glass under tap in lab.) There were plenty of glasses in rack by sink. (Must find out what usually happened about washing them up.) Murderer may have washed up, of course, but the one dirty glass *was* left. (Can I make anything of that? Not yet, anyway.)

Cyanide could have been administered by Potts and Oman while putting M. to bed. But this involves collusion between them (improbable), and Dragon does not think M. had been dead as long as this would imply. Either (or any one else) could have gone back later and administered it. (When was hypodermic syringe available, or was there more than one?)

Did the same person poison S. and M. with the laudanum, and M. with the cyanide? If so, why the cyanide, if M. would have died in any case? Did murderer know he would have died, or was he (or she) afraid he might recover, like Dr. S.? If the latter, this implies the murderer wanted M. to die, whereas otherwise it might be plausible to regard the poisoning of M. (with the laudanum) as an accident. In fact, rather strong reasons for regarding it as accidental (laudanum clearly meant for Dr. S.). But cyanide definitely not accidental. Have we to deal with two separate murderers, or did the one murderer acquire a reason for killing M. *after* he had poisoned him by accident? (All this is getting much too speculative, but I can't leave it out.)

Any one could have gone into M.'s bedroom at any time after he was put to bed. That leaves time of murder (on that score) wide open. Mrs. M. says she did not go into bedroom at all after dinner. (Don't know whether to believe her or not.) She was in that part of the house, in her daughter's and her son's rooms, by her own admission. (This must have been well after 11.30, but she may have been there previously.) It is an open question whether she had the opportunity to steal the cyanide from the library (deal with this later under Q.M.).

Motive. Obvious motive for killing M. was to get rid of highly undesirable husband. This fully consistent with murder being unpremeditated, assuming the first poisoning of M. to have been accidental, as I think it was. No other motive for killing M. emerges at present, though of course one may, out of further inquiries. Motive, as at present known, points straight at Mrs. M. and at no one else (and she had also a motive for killing Dr. S.). But did she? Must find out more about her *real* character.

3. *Quenie Mopridge.* What a woman! My first impression is that she is a thoroughly selfish, bad hearted, rude, class-conscious snob, who regards the world as made for her convenience, and has no regard for anybody else's. Or is this only a superficial view, and is there more *to* her than that? She appears to be fond of her children: at all events she fusses over them. Her attitude to her brother not apparently *hostile*; rather contemptuous (but all this may be put on). I wonder. (Would she put on the contempt, or try to conceal it if it is real?)

There is not much to add under Q.M. to what I have put already under M. Her motive for killing Dr. S. seems to me weak, unless she is hard up (this may have to be looked into).

Did she kill M. but have nothing to do with the attempt on Dr. S. ? The method in the laudanum case seems to me a bit unfeminine ; but I don't put much on that. Does Q.M. know anything about poisons ?

Could Q.M. have stolen the cyanide in the library ? Dr. Franck's evidence is against this, for what it is worth. But it is not worth much. He was probably not noticing exactly where every one was in the room *all the time*. I conclude she almost certainly *could* have taken the bottle—which is not to say she did take it.

4. *Gurth Moggridge*. Every one seems to agree that G.M. is an exceptionally nasty boy. He is greedy, disobedient, ill-natured. But the question for me is, Did he *intend* to steal the cyanide, or was the removal of it, as he maintains, an accident ? i.e. was he just fiddling with the bottles, and did he grab that particular one by pure chance when Ornan surprised him ? I don't *know* the answer to this, but chance does seem the likeliest explanation. The alternative is to suppose that he meant to murder somebody, and that must mean his father. Of course, that is possible, but it would take a lot to make me believe it. Besides, I don't see how he can actually have killed R.M., as he seems to have had no opportunity of recovering the bottle after it was taken from him by Franck and Col. Kennell. He had, further, very little opportunity of abstracting any from the bottle *before* it was taken from him—unless he had already done this *before* Ornan surprised him. (Mem. search his clothes and belongings for any trace of cyanide or possible container.) But I don't believe it.

Had G.M. an opportunity of poisoning the beer ? Yes, either before or after dinner. But no more than several others. I think, by the way, Dr. S. had clearly been poisoned *before* G.M. was found in the lab. at 10.30. Yorick says the symptoms could hardly have developed as quickly as the alternative would imply. Ergo, if G.M. had poisoned the beer, it must have been during an earlier visit to the lab.

Is it worth considering whether G.M. stole the cyanide *for* the murderer ? That would point to his mother as the murderer (or ? his sister). I don't take this possibility very seriously, but it is possible.

What happened to G.M. after he escaped from Col. Kennell about 10.30 ? He was found (by Mrs. M.) in his sister's room. But *when* did he go there ? Did he do anything in between ? (It is an infernal nuisance that the house has a back as well as a front staircase. The back staircase being little used,

means that people can get up and downstairs without much risk of being noticed, whereas there is much more chance of their running into someone if they go the front way. Normally, the back staircase seems hardly to be used at all; but it does give access to the laboratory without going through the hall.)

5. *Patricia Moggridge*. I seem to have nothing at all against P.M., and very little impression of what she is like. She strikes me as a colourless, modern young woman (or girl?—I should put her at 19-20), rather bored and disdainful, but that may be either mannerism or shyness. Her story is that she went up to her bedroom immediately after dinner (? any special reason), and stopped there reading till her brother turned up (? time). Did he tell her about the cyanide? (Forgot to ask that.) Then he stayed in her room till Mrs. M. found them (again ? time, but much later) and told her to see G.M. into bed. Then she went to bed (so she says). Mrs. M. had not told her about poisoning of Dr. S., and her story is she knew nothing about *either* poisoning till the morning, when her mother told her. No reason for disbelieving any of that, that I can see. But she may be *callous*, as well as bored, etc. Could have connived at R.M.'s murder, I suppose, if her mother was involved. But I don't think so. Inclined to leave her out of it for the present.

6. *David Oman*. Cold-blooded young man (? 35), I should say. No fool, but self-centred. Been with Dr. S. a number of years (? how many) as research assistant (chemist). Seems to think well of his own abilities as original worker. Why has he stopped so long with Dr. S., if S. is really a crank? He says job easy and well-paid, and gave chance to pursue his own researches. (Sounds quite plausible.) Clearly dislikes the foreigners (apt to dislike most people, I should say). Is much disliked by both G.M. and Mary Philip. (What is Potts's attitude towards him?)

D.O. alone, besides Dr. S., had regular access to laboratory. But nothing in this, in view of Dr. S.'s carelessness. Knows about poisons presumably, being a chemist. Yorick rather surprised he seems to have known so little about best method of treating Dr. S. after he was found. All that appears to have been left to Dr. Glück.

Can't see how D.O. could possibly have had any motive for killing R.M. He might have had motive for killing Dr. S.—for example, theft of invention; but this supposes Dr. S.'s researches are of value, whereas D.O. says not (see earlier).

Or did Potts know too much about invention for theft by Oman to be possible in the event of Dr. S.'s death? (Must look into this.)

The truth is, I suspect D.O. But have I any real grounds? If he *couldn't* have wanted to murder R.M., can he possibly have tried to murder Dr. S.? This seems to involve two separate murderers—which I don't like, but can't rule out absolutely.

One thing that makes me suspect D.O. is the amount of suspicion he threw on other people. (But this may be only his ill-nature. He is ill-natured, I am sure.)

D.O. could have taken the cyanide bottle from the library. (According to Franck, he was one of the two best placed for doing this.) But that would only apply if he killed R.M. (Had he a motive for killing R.M. after all—see earlier about whether murder of R.M. was *premeditated* or not.)

D.O. was also in the best position for replacing the cyanide bottle in the lab. cupboard, or pretending to do so, and then finding it for us. But the lab. was so badly guarded (? my fault) and the lock of the cupboard so easy, that there is not a great deal in this. (See if I can follow up this point further—about *who* replaced the bottle, and *when*.)

I have a strong feeling that D.O. is up to *some game*. But need it have been murder? (Find out more about Oman if possible. Is anything known of his record?)

7. *Mary Philip*. Dr. S.'s secretary (early twenties—or ? a little older), obviously a lady. College girl. I like the look of her (but that's not evidence, mind !) Her behaviour seems to have been perfectly normal throughout, and no reason at all for suspecting her. No motive for either poisoning, that I can see. A clean bill, unless something quite new turns up.

M.P. has her knife pretty badly into D.O. (Any particular reason, I wonder, or just general dislike?)

8. *George Potts*. Typical successful business man of the hearty kind. Fairly frequent visitor to his brother-in-law, Dr. S., for short business visits. Came this time to discuss important business matter with Dr. S., who turned him down. (Can such a disagreement be regarded as a motive for murder? Well, he had a further motive probably, in that his wife stood to inherit half her brother's money.)

G.P. is managing director of Sambourne, Swallow and Co. (Put through inquiry to Birmingham police about status, etc., of firm and of G.P. personally.) Dr. S. seems to have held

controlling interest in the business. (Ask lawyer, when he can be got, about this.)

G.P. arrived at Excalibur House with Mrs. M. and children at about 5.40. Is known to have been in his bedroom changing at about 6.35. Then nothing known of his movements till dinner-time. (Ask him about this. I didn't when I interviewed him, and he didn't say.) Says he saw Dr. S. on business for a few minutes at 10 o'clock. Had he seen him earlier? If not, this seems very short time for discussion on important business matter, especially as they disagreed. G.P. does not seem to have had a chance of talking to Dr. S. between dinner and 10 o'clock, as he helped put R.M. to bed, and after that Dr. S. was in lab. (Or wasn't he, up to 10? Oman left him there about 9.30.) Did G.P. talk to Dr. S. *before* dinner. (Ask him this.) He daren't lie, with Dr. S. getting better, even if he wants to, and I'm not suggesting he does.

G.P. obviously *could* have poisoned the beer. When? Dr. S. left lab. about 6.45. Say, any time between then and 7.30. (Or ? earlier, soon after arrival, when he went to put away his car. Try to find out whether lab. was empty at that time.) Possibly could have poisoned the beer *after* dinner, but only between 9.30 and 10, and then not very likely for other reasons. (I'm almost sure the beer was poisoned before 7.30, because of R.M.)

G.P. had no obvious motive for killing R.M. Too altruistic to suppose he did it for sake of Q.M., especially as he appears to dislike her. Again, the notion that he tried to poison Dr. S. seems to involve two murderers—or, of course, motive for killing R.M. at present unknown.

Is collusion between Q.M. and G.P. a possibility? That would provide motives for both murders. But I don't much fancy the idea.

How much did G.P. know about Dr. S.'s invention, and what did he think of it? Could he have wanted to steal it—or rather to appropriate half of its value by removing Dr. S.? Possible, I suppose.

G.P. was in the library, and could have taken the cyanide. According to Franck, he was not well placed for doing this; but see earlier as to value of Franck's evidence on this point. He could also pretty easily have put the bottle back in the lab. cupboard. He was a person with easy access to the lab.

If G.P. had already poisoned R.M. (by accident), why poison him again on purpose (but there may have been two

murderers)? Suppose he did want to kill R.M., wouldn't he have known enough to feel sure that he would die of the laudanum? (No, not necessarily, especially as G.P. is an engineer and not a chemist.)

I don't think G.P. is guilty. He doesn't seem suspicious, and there is really nothing against him, except opportunity and a motive which seems insufficient unless he was in financial difficulties (see earlier).

9-10. *Mr. and Mrs. Mudge*. I suppose they might get a legacy under Dr. S.'s will. But I know the Mudges and, though they have plenty of faults, I don't think they are murderers. Mudge is not intelligent enough for this class of work. His wife is brighter, but I'm pretty sure she knows nothing at all about poisons.

Mrs. Mudge is a great talker. (So was her mother, who was a great friend of my mother's when she was alive.) Wash her right out.

Probably wash out Mudge too, unless he has been pretending for years to be much more of a fool than he is. Not a Mudge crime, I'm pretty confident.

That finishes the English. Now for the foreigners.

11. *Dr. Eva Gluck*. Vienna. Psychologist (sort of practising doctor without either drugs or saws, if I understand rightly). Queer, middle-aged party—ugly as sin, with her black moustache. Several people seem to have their knives into her, and I don't wonder. She's a self-assertive female.

E.G. seems to have made herself very useful after Dr. S. was found. Yorick says she undoubtedly saved his life. But surely she wouldn't have, if she had wanted to murder him? There was nothing to stop her from doing nothing till Yorick came, which Yorick says would have meant he would have died. That seems enough to exonerate her as far as trying to kill Dr. S. is concerned; and I can't conceive that she can have had any motive for killing R.M. I think she is clearly out of it.

E.G., by the way, is an old friend of Dr. Franck's. (Point noted for completeness, but probably of no significance in relation to the crimes.)

12. *Dr. Amadeus Franck*. Recently released from internment. Arrived too late to have any possible connection with the attempts on Dr. S. and R.M. (the beer). I can conceive no reason for connecting him with the second poisoning of R.M. either. Seems to have behaved officiously in the library, when he tried to take charge of the search for Dr. S. Also questioned

Westinghouse very officiously later on in the hall. But this is not significant. He presumably is by nature officious.

His view about who could most easily have taken the cyanide from the library has been commented on already.

13. *Professor Johann Meyerbeer*. From Berlin. Stuffy old bird. Just what I have always supposed German professors to be like. Diabetic. His hypodermic syringe was borrowed for use on Dr. S. I have raised earlier the question of what became of it subsequently. I have really nothing to note about J.M. I've not gone into him seriously, and don't expect to need to. Went to bed before R.M. was found, and stopped there, as far as I know.

Said to be an inveterate grumbler ; but what of it ?

14. *Bertha Meyerbeer*. Have been told she has pro-Fascist opinions, and again that she has not. Can't say I care what her opinions are. Seems to be a useful body, who helps to keep the house clean (which it badly needs) and does what her husband tells her. Helped look after Dr. S. after he was found, but went to bed when crisis was over. She brought the syringe for Dr. Glück. Did she also take it back again ? If so, when ? (No, Frank did that.)

15. *Dr. Kurt Aronson*. From Vienna. The kind of man who makes people who are not anti-Semites understand why other people are. A thoroughly nasty little man. Said to be a Biblical scholar and a convert from Judaism.

There are strong superficial reasons for suspecting Aronson. He was definitely caught by Oman in the laboratory yesterday, where he had no business to be (he does not deny this), and is said to have been doing something in the corner by the bee barrel. He definitely broke the aliens' curfew very badly, and tried to lie about where he had been. His story about his repeated calls on Greta Buck, and his not finding her, sounds pretty thin. (I must see her, and inquire into her relations with him as soon as possible). He was also in the pub earlier in the evening. (When exactly ? In the bar, or elsewhere ?) Oman's story about his being let into the pub out of hours also needs following up.

K.A. could have had some grudge against Dr. S., or some motive for killing him. But I don't know what it was. Nor can I see what motive he could have had for killing R.M.—or what opportunity, *if he was really out all the evening* as he says. Was he *not* really out, but only making himself an alibi by pretending to have been out ? (Rather clever if he was ; but he probably is clever.) He was missed earlier when they were

all looking for Dr. S., and it seems he probably *was* out then. But he could have come back, gone up and down by the back stairs, and gone out again. That's all hypothesis, though.

At all events, Aronson is definitely suspect, to a high degree. But of what is he suspect? Murder? Which, or both? Or merely of being an undesirable character, who has found himself mixed up in a murder case? The key question there seems to be, What was he doing in the laboratory? (And how far can I take Oman's word for what he was doing?)

16. *Dr. Arturo Rossini*. Italian Civil Engineer. Said to be in exile from Italy because anti-Fascist. Was working in Paris up to German occupation. Then escaped to Lisbon, and later to England. Interned on landing, but recently released. (Obtain full particulars about him from H.O. and the Special Branch. Who procured his release?)

A.R. was out in the village on Saturday evening, and visited Jolyan, who is a suspicious character of Fascist sympathies. (? Is Jolyan a serious Fascist or not? This must be looked into.) Returned soon after 10.30 (thus breaking curfew regulation, though not so seriously as K.A.). What did he do later in the evening? No evidence so far for period after Dr. S. was found. Did he go to bed? (Must ask him—and others.)

Franck threw out curious hints about A.R., suggesting that Rossini was not his real name, but denied knowing him, and would say nothing to substantiate his hints. Does Franck know anything about him or not? If so, what is the source of his information? (Is it Dr. Glück, who was also in Paris at some time? Ask her about A.R.)

I don't like the look of A.R., but that may be prejudice. Italian organ-grinder's monkey, and that sort of thing. Nothing much against him really, unless Franck's hints mean something. Suspend judgment.

17. *Professor de Wauters*. (? Christian name.) Dutchman. Art critic or something of the sort. I know less about him than about any of the others so far. (Find out more. Question him again.)

Had altercation with Q.M. about his bedroom, which she wanted to appropriate. Locked her out. After dinner, locked himself in his room, and denies leaving it again except to wash. Denies having even heard of the murders till breakfast-time. (No evidence to the contrary: nobody appears to have seen him after dinner. Seems to be right out of it, but evidence not conclusive.)

Very polite, gentlemanly person. I should say his desire

was to get mixed up with the whole thing as little as possible—that is, assuming his innocence, and anything else seems unlikely at present.

18. *Colonel Kennell*. 19. *Robert Leens*. Put in for completeness only. They obviously had nothing to do with the crimes. Kennell's charges against Franck as behaving suspiciously in the road do not carry much weight with me. "The Wearing of the Green" is not, I am informed, an I.R.A. song. See no reason to connect Franck with I.R.A. or anything anti-British at present.

SUMMARY

Suspicious—

Kurt Aronson (of what, though?).
David Oman (mainly on personal grounds).
George Potts (but I doubt it).
Mrs. Moggridge (double motive).

Possible—

Gurth Moggridge (umph!).
Dr. Rossini (personal again, mainly).
Mudge (???)

Apparently out of it (or nearly so)—

Patricia Moggridge.
Mary Philip.
Mrs. Mudge.
Eva Glück (saved Dr. S.'s life).
Dr. Franck (not there).
Professor Meyerbeer (personal grounds).
Bertha Meyerbeer (personal grounds).
Professor de Wauters (?).

NOTE (added later).—1. Analysis of contents of barrel, after removal to police station, shows *large* quantity of laudanum, or morphine. Contents of the two untasted glasses show poison in about the same proportion as contents of barrel. Poison also found in dregs of a glass drunk from, presumably by Dr. S., but not enough left for exact proportions in full glass to be determined.

2. Oman says *large* quantity of morphine missing from stock in laboratory cupboard, but cannot give exact amount, as Dr. S., he says, was careless about checking quantities used.

SOME POINTS

1. This is a very odd house. Why does Dr. S. keep all these refugees? Is he on the level himself? It would make the whole thing different if he isn't. Spies, for example. Mustn't rule that quite out. Bright idea, to cover up your own spying with a lot of refugees who've been vetted by the Home Office, and released as O.K. Just an idea. No evidence. But possibly worth thinking about.

2. One murderer or two? That's important to settle as soon as may be. Two quite separate murderers would make a horribly confusing trail. It seems unlikely, but . . . Aren't most murders unlikely? I'm maundering.

3. Was Moggridge drunk, or wasn't he? Could he have been poisoned *at dinner*? Mudge brought him the coffee then. Mudge? But the beer poisoned Sambourne. Got to wait for analysis. I've been assuming the beer barrel was poisoned and I am almost certain it was. But supposing it wasn't, where are we then? The devil only knows. It ~~isn't~~ *proved* the beer poisoned Sambourne (not yet). But I'm nearly sure it did.

4. Between us, Keynes and I have searched the house thoroughly, and found nothing suspicious. But haven't searched Sambourne's papers, or Oman's. Ought I to? Have to ask for permission (from whom? Lawyer? Potts? and of course Oman). Keynes says nothing suspicious among foreigners' papers. But there wouldn't be, would there? They'd be too careful. Probably time to destroy anything too, before Keynes got round to it.

5. Scotland Yard? Ought we to? Ought I to ask the C.C.? Or will he on his own? Don't like the idea, but . . . Better see the super. Hell!

2

MARY PHILIP'S VERSION

MARY PHILIP TO HER FRIEND, BELLA LINDMAN

BELLA DARLING,—Nice of you to write so soon, and nice of you to say you enjoyed my portrait-gallery. I'm sorry Philip's leave got cut—but he'll get some more, won't he? Maybe he'll get Christmas.

I hope you can stand receiving oldest-friend confidences, because I'm afraid you're going to get a hatful. And I'm even going to ask you to destroy this letter when you've read it, said she, going all melodramatic ; but you'll see why when you have. This show, which was comic, has suddenly gone terribly serious—and the police are here ! Really.

I'm going to try and write sensibly, though actually I'm pretty jittery. As you'll probably see in the papers, someone has tried to murder Dr. Sambourne and someone has actually murdered somebody else—or that may have been a mistake. The police—including a nice stupid colonel who's the chief constable—are here in the house, but I don't believe they have the faintest idea who did it. And I don't see how they should, without knowing the people.

I'd better try and tell you what happened in order. Last night Dr. Sambourne was poisoned with laudanum that had been put into a cask of beer in his lab. He drinks a lot of beer—I don't know if I told you—and he keeps a cask in his lab., and drinks it all himself, as Oman's a teetotaller and the foreigners aren't allowed in the lab. At least, they *could* get in, as Dr. S. is always forgetting to lock it ; but I don't think they'd dare drink his beer, let alone poison it.

That wasn't what happened first, however. (I'm sorry I seem to be getting in a muddle.) What happened first was that while we were having dinner last night there unexpectedly turned up a Mr. Moggridge, who's married to Dr. Sambourne's sister but doesn't live with her because he drinks like a fish and was supposed to be safe in an inebriates' home. Mrs. Moggridge is staying here ; she'd just planted herself and her son and daughter, though Dr. S. had done his best to put her off, and she was sitting at dinner when Mr. M. rolled in nearly blind drunk, as it seemed. He was all merry and bright—and pretty offensive—for a little while, and then he suddenly passed out, and Oman and Mr. Potts (who in case I haven't told you is Dr. Sambourne's brother-in-law and runs a factory in Birmingham which Dr. S. owns) got him out and put him to bed.

The point is that it afterwards turned out that Mr. M. wasn't drunk, but poisoned with laudanum, the same as Dr. S. ; but nobody knew that then—or that laudanum makes you look as though you were drunk until you go to sleep, by which time you're as good as dead unless a doctor's got hold of you.

Well, after we'd finished dinner and Mr. Moggridge had been put to bed, Dr. S. went off to the lab. with Oman, and I

went to my room hoping to get a bit of peace. I was feeling like death, because the other Moggridges had only come that afternoon and nobody would do anything about rooms for them, so I had had to be chambermaid myself and get ready three rooms that hadn't been cleaned or aired since the Flood—and when the woman got there she hadn't a civil word, simply cursed me and tried to pinch Professor de Wauters's room, but he'd locked himself in, so she couldn't.

(I must say, even if it's interrupting the story, that Mrs. M. is about the most frightful woman I ever met. She's a positive nightmare. She's the kind that is extremely snobbish, without having anything to be snobbish about, if you know what I mean; she has the manners of a cow and tries to grab everything she sees for herself. And she has a son called Gurth, who seems to me the most fat, greedy, spiteful, spoilt brat I ever saw. Even if they have suffered a bereavement, that doesn't make me think any better of them—but I'm sorry, I'm getting ahead.)

As I said, I was sitting in my room, pretending to type and wondering why cleaning gives one such a pain in the back, when in came Oman, started to fiddle about with things on my table and then told me he was fed up with the old man and was giving notice. I wasn't listening; I didn't care what he did, and it was quite a while before it dawned on me that he was Making me an Offer! That little horror! When I took in what he was saying, I said No—reasonably politely, I hope; and then I cut off to my own bedroom. On the way, I had to pass the study door and heard frightful shouting going on inside. I stopped for a moment, in case it was going to be Dr. S. shouting for me; but then the door opened and out came Mr. Potts looking furious and dashed past me, without seeing me, I think. I started upstairs, and as I was going up Dr. S. came out of the study. I stopped, in case he wanted me; but he walked off towards the lab.—so I went on to my own room and went dead asleep on my bed.

Some time afterwards—I don't know how long because I was so dead—the old German professor Meyerbeer came knocking at the door and asked did I know where Dr. Sambourne was, because there were some people looking for him downstairs. I said I supposed he was in the lab.; but as that didn't seem to satisfy Meyerbeer I got up and went down to the hall, and I found a lot of people headed by an old idiot of a Home Guard called Colonel Kennell, all asking for Dr. Sambourne. To cut a long story short, after a bit of discussion, we

all started to look for the doctor, and in the end we found him on the floor of the room by the lab. which he uses as a bedroom. And he'd been poisoned with laudanum, as I told you before.

What happened next is all like a bad dream still. Dr. Glück, the Austrian psychologist, took over Dr. Sambourne while they were getting a proper doctor, and I had to help her—and him, afterwards—to do all sorts of very medical and extremely unpleasant things to the poor old thing. But in the end, it seemed, his life was saved, and I was really very glad, because he's not a bad old stick and has treated me pretty well in his own way.

Only somebody else's life *wasn't* saved. While we were all working at Dr. S. someone sent for the police as well as the doctor, and when they came and had looked at Dr. S. they took an idea, I don't know why, to look at Mr. Moggridge as well; and they went to his wife's room, where he'd been put to sleep it off, and he was dead. They got to him too late to do anything about it—it seems he must have somehow got into Dr. Sambourne's lab. and drunk some of the beer which was meant for Dr. S.—but it didn't kill him, it killed Mr. Moggridge, for whom it wasn't meant at all. It does sound the most extraordinary muddle, doesn't it?

(Later)

I stopped writing this, and now I've re-read it I realise you may be wondering why I'm telling you all about it. It isn't only that I feel I must get it off my chest to somebody; though I do; it is that I'm really frightfully worried, and I want to get out of here. And I want you to help me.

I didn't know anything about the police being in the house till this morning, because I was sitting up most of the night watching in Dr. Sambourne's room. But as soon as I got downstairs in the morning there was a dismal-looking inspector called Newte, of all names!—he does look as if he'd just come out of some very dingy pond—who began asking me all the usual sort of questions. I told him I didn't know anything that could possibly "throw any light on the crime." Actually it wasn't until after he'd finished asking his questions and let me go that I remembered I hadn't said anything about hearing Dr. S. and Mr. Potts shouting at one another in the library—if that would have "thrown any light." I don't think it would, as a matter of fact, because Mr. Potts is quite decent and gets on very well with Dr. S.; and anyway if he'd been going to murder Dr. S. he'd hardly have yelled at him so that

every one could have heard, would he? It isn't that that's worrying me. . . .

I *must* get it out. It came over me, suddenly, while the inspector was talking, that I knew who must have done it. It was the boy, Gurth Moggridge. I told you he is a thoroughly pestilent child, spoilt and sulky, and he was just as cross as his mother because Dr. Sambourne hadn't arranged for them to have the best rooms in the house—when nobody wanted them here at all! But what I *didn't* tell you was that some time yesterday evening, a bit before Dr. Meyerbeer came and woke me up, Oman had found this Gurth snooping round the lab. He ran away, but he was caught by a Home Guard, and then they found that he'd stolen a bottle of some other sort of poison and had still got it on him.

Now do you see? I'm absolutely dead certain that it was Gurth who put the poison in the beer; it's exactly the sort of thing that type of child would do. But I've not told the police that, and I'm *not going to*. I'm quite sure he didn't intend to kill Dr. Sambourne, only to make him sick or something of the sort. If it had only been a question of Dr. Sambourne, though, I would have told—it would be a jolly good thing for Mrs. Moggridge, anyway, to find out something of the truth about her disgusting darling. But, don't you see, Bella, if that's what happened, the boy's *killed his own father*, and that's too appalling a thing to fasten on any one, particularly if it was really most of an accident, as you might say.

Anyway, I'm not going to tell—I couldn't do it. But that means I must get out of here as quickly as possible, or I shall let something out when the police ask me questions again. (In any case, it would be pretty awful to stay here with Dr. S. and not wanting me, and Oman leering around—he *still* can't take in that I like him about as well as a toad.) So do you think you could be an angel and find me a nice quiet job doing war work or something, or at least send me some sort of urgent telegram? Do if you possibly can—you don't think I'm being an utter fool, do you?

And do for heaven's sake burn this letter.

Your distracted

MARY.

VI. THIRD ACT

I

COLONEL WELSH TAKES STOCK

"WELL, NEWTE," said the chief constable, "the question is, How do you stand now?"

"Not very well, sir, I'm afraid. I have done my best to sort things out, but I have nothing more than suspicions so far. There is not a single clue that points definitely to any one person."

The chief constable and Inspector Newte were sitting in Colonel Welsh's office at the police station, whither Newte had come to report.

"Tell us how far you *have* got," said Colonel Welsh.

"Well, sir, as you know, Dr. Dragon has examined the body further. His report is conclusive that Moggridge was poisoned twice, first with morphine and later with cyanide of potassium. Dragon says the morphine would undoubtedly have killed him without the cyanide—so that the second poisoning was, in that sense, unnecessary. He thinks the morphine was probably taken several hours before the cyanide, and probably in the beer which Moggridge had undoubtedly been drinking. But, of course, there cannot be absolute medical proof of that. As for the cyanide, he cannot say certainly how it was administered, beyond the very probable suggestion that it may have been injected. There was undoubtedly a small puncture, probably made by a syringe, in the man's forearm."

"Dr. Meyerbeer's syringe!" Welsh exclaimed.

"No, sir, I don't think so. Dr. Meyerbeer's was in use downstairs."

"But was it? That assumes you know when the cyanid^d was injected. The syringe wasn't fetched for Dr. Sambour until quite late. Nearly half-past eleven, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir. You are right there. But I think the cyanid was probably injected later than that. That is Dr. Dragon's view, though he will not be quite definite about it."

"Who fetched the syringe, by the way? I mean, when it was wanted for Dr. Sambourne."

"Ivens. Or rather, he went for it, and Mrs. Meyerbeer came with it. That's all I know."

"Better find out where it was. Find out all you can. It may be important. Find out what happened to the syringe *after* it had been used on Dr. Sambourne, as well as before."

"Yes, sir. I had made a note to find out all I could about that. Shall I go on?"

The chief constable nodded, and Newte continued his report. "The beer in the barrel has been analysed, and has been found to contain a large quantity of morphine. I needn't trouble you with the amounts. The same applies to the beer in the glasses which you and Colonel Kennell fortunately did not drink, and to the dregs in the other glass found in the laboratory. There was a supply of morphine in the cupboard; and Oman, who checked the quantity, says a large amount is missing."

"That seems all neat and tidy," said Colonel Welsh.

"Some cyanide is also missing from the bottle which was returned to the cupboard—more than enough to account for the dose taken by Moggridge. There were no finger-prints on the cyanide bottle, except Mr. Oman's; and he says he handled it after it was put back. His are also the only prints on the morphine bottle; but he has handled that too since the murder. Evidently both bottles were wiped clean."

"Does that follow?"

"Yes, sir, I think so, even if Oman is the murderer, which I take it is what you have in mind. The finger-prints left on the bottle only indicate one handling, and he would probably have wiped off any earlier prints in case he wasn't able to be the first to handle them afterwards. You see, if we had got them before he had a chance of handling them again, and his prints *had* been on them . . ."

"No need to labour the point, Newte. I've got it. Go on."

"The glass with the dregs in it shows Dr. Sambourne's finger-prints, and also Oman's. Oman says he usually washes up the glasses, which would account for it. Your glass and Colonel Kennell's also show Oman's prints, as well as others, which I presume are yours and his."

Colonel Welsh chuckled. "Haven't got mine yet, have you? Did you get Oman's with his consent, or how?"

"With his consent, sir, though he seemed a bit unwilling. Well, sir, that's about the lot of the physical clues. The cupboard itself didn't take prints."

"What about the coffee Moggridge had at dinner? Is that given a clean bill?"

"The cup had been washed up. Mrs. Mudge produced the jug it came from, with some left in it. No poison in that, sir."

"Then I think we may exonerate the coffee—and Mrs. Mudge. Did the coffee Dr. Sambourne was given later come from the same brew?"

"I didn't think to ask."

"Never mind. I don't think it matters. You say that finishes the physical clues. What comes next?"

"Not a great deal that is helpful, I'm afraid, sir. We have been checking up on Dr. Aronson's movements during the evening. You remember, his second story was that he had been trying to call on Greta Buck, but had failed to find her at home, though he made several attempts."

"What has she to say about it?"

"She says someone did try to get into her cottage several times that evening—knocked at the door and shouted. She had gone to bed early, and refused to get up or to answer. She admitted that she had a pretty good idea of who the caller was—recognised the voice, I suppose—and says that she had no wish to let him in. Her story is that he has been pestering her with his attentions, and that she doesn't want to have anything to do with him. I should say he had been in her cottage before in the evenings, though she would not admit it. Probably he had been paying her attentions, and they had quarrelled. Or possibly the whole thing is a put-up job between them, designed to give Aronson a sort of alibi for the whole evening. It is not a very good alibi, as he could clearly have slipped back to Excalibur House between his calls on her—even supposing the calls were actually made. But that sort of alibi often carries more conviction than the apparently perfect sort, with no gaps in it at all."

"You're speaking now, Newte," said the chief constable, "quite as if you believe Aronson to be the guilty man."

"Well, sir, he is a very strong suspect."

"Did you find out what times these alleged calls were made?"

"I tried to, sir. But Miss Buck said she didn't know. She was in bed and had withdrawn the black-out, so that she couldn't look at her watch. She was awake when the first call was made—she thinks, between ten and half-past. . . ."

"That would square with Aronson having gone there as soon as the pub closed, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, sir. But she can't put any time to the two later calls. She was asleep on those occasions, and the knocking woke her up, but she doesn't know when. At least, that is her story."

"Which you don't believe?"

"I don't know, sir, whether to believe it or not. Greta Buck is no better than she should be, in my opinion."

"Or Aronson, I should imagine. Tell me about Miss Buck. I know her by sight, of course, and have heard a little about her. But you may know more."

"Not very much," said Newte. "She came here as an evacuee from London about a year ago, and managed to take over old Prewin's shop when he died. Prewin's widow still has the upper part: so Miss Buck lives elsewhere, in the cottage that used to belong to Mrs. Mortlebeey. You know the place, sir?"

Welsh nodded. "What's her reputation locally?" he asked.

"I have little doubt she had been having some sort of affair with Aronson, sir. That's what is being said in the village."

"Quite one of life's little romances, what?" said the chief constable. "I can't say I admire her taste."

"I think so, sir. Probably no harm in it, except in her abetting him in breaking the aliens' curfew."

"She's Jewish, isn't she?"

"Yes, sir. But I've nothing against her, beyond what I said just now. Lonely, I should say. The people hereabouts don't like her. But there is not a great deal in that. They don't like these London evacuees, mostly."

"So she comforts herself with Aronson. Well, every woman to her fancy. Anything more about Aronson?"

"Yes, sir, a little. He had struck up a sort of friendship with Gertie James, the daughter of Hal James who keeps the White Hart, and he did have a habit of calling there sometimes out of hours, and being let in by the back way."

"Another romance, Newte! Dr. Aronson seems to be a regular Don Juan. I must say, he doesn't look the part. What does Hal James say to him?"

"He expressed dislike, sir, when I asked him. But he is pretty much under his daughter's thumb since her mother died."

"And she encourages Aronson's attentions, does she?"

"It seems so, sir. She flew at me when I started asking

questions about him. But Hal James says he was only in the moon bar for a while on Saturday night, and not in the house; and Hal wouldn't lie about it, I'm pretty sure. In any case, the question does not seem to me to matter, from our point of view."

"Surely everything about Aronson matters, if you really suspect him of being the murderer. What do you suggest his motive was, by the way?"

"As to that, sir, I am afraid I am still quite in the dark."

"Surely it is pretty difficult to imagine him as having a motive for killing Moggridge?"

Newte shook his head sadly. "Very difficult, sir. And I'm not saying he did murder Moggridge. There may have been a couple of would-be murderers."

"I don't like that notion, Newte," said the chief constable. "Of course, you must follow the case up in your own way; but I confess that sounds to me a bit . . . fantastic."

"So it does to me, sir," Newte answered. "But I don't know how to make sense of it otherwise. One can imagine Aronson having a grievance against Dr. Sambourne, or some reason for putting him out of the way; but . . ."

"Pure hypothesis, Newte. You've nothing to show he had a motive."

"He was caught doing something in the laboratory, just behind the beer-barrel, sir."

"Yes, by Oman. So Oman says."

"Aronson admits being there, sir."

"But not tampering with the barrel, eh? Well, of course he wouldn't. I see Aronson is your favoured quarry, Newte. Nothing to report about the other curfew-breaker, Rossini?"

"Yes, sir. Oman, if you remember, suggested he might have been with Jolyan. But he wasn't. Jolyan wasn't at home that night. I don't know where he went—yet. But I'm still working."

"Carry on," said the chief constable. "What comes next?"

"I'm really afraid that is about all, sir. Of course, I have got into the question of opportunity; but it doesn't carry far. Absolutely *any one* could have got into the laboratory, with the laudanum, and poisoned the beer. The place was open, and the cupboard unlocked."

"Yes, but *when* was the place empty?" Welsh asked. "Wasn't Sambourne there nearly up to dinner-time, or was he?"

"Yes, sir. But she can't put any time to the two later calls. She was asleep on those occasions, and the knocking woke her up, but she doesn't know when. At least, that is her story."

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"Yes, but *when* was the place empty?" Welsh asked. "Wasn't Sambourne there nearly up to dinner-time, or wasn't he?"

"There was three quarters of an hour before dinner began when we don't know of either of them being there. Oman left first, and went to his own room. I don't know exactly when Sambourne left; but Mrs. Moggridge met him on his way upstairs about three quarters of an hour before dinner was served, and I am assuming he had been in the laboratory up to then—that is, about a quarter to seven. Of course, he may have gone back again to the laboratory before dinner; but it seems unlikely. It is established that he had spilt something over his trousers, and Oman says he had changed into a different suit at dinner. Of course, there is the further possibility that the beer was poisoned earlier in the day; but the three quarters of an hour before dinner seems the likeliest time.

"Then there is the cyanide. That must have been administered well after eleven, because it wasn't until after then that the bottle was taken from where Ivens had put it down in the library. I think it was probably administered a good bit later, most likely not very long before you found the body. That's Dragon's view too; but it is not definite. He won't give a definite time. The question then, of course, is who had the double opportunity, first to take the cyanide from the library and then to go upstairs and use it to poison Moggridge. As far as I can see, quite a number of people had. Those in the library were Kennell, Ivens, Potts, Oman, Rossini, Meyerbeer and his wife, Dr. Gluck, Dr. Franck and Mrs. Moggridge. Mudge was also dodging about, but I don't think he went actually into the room. Any of that lot could have taken the stuff, as far as I can see, though according to Franck the two who had the best chance were Oman and Rossini, because they were standing for some time just by where Ivens had put it down. I don't put much weight on that. I think one has to say that any of them could have taken it."

"Next there's the question of opportunity to administer the poison. Of the persons I've mentioned, Potts, Oman, Miss Philip, and Mrs. Moggridge were among the search party which went round the house looking for Dr. Sambourne. So were Colonel Kennell and Ivens; but I'm counting both of them out. Dr. Gluck, Franck, Rossini, and the Meyerbeers were left behind in the library. But none of them stopped there."

"Did the search party go upstairs, before Sambourne was found?"

"Yes, some of them did. But I don't think they made any search at all upstairs. There seems to have been some sort of argument, conducted on the stairs, about whether they should divide into groups or all keep together, and about which part of the house to search first; and it ended, Colonel Kennell says, in their agreeing to keep together and to begin with the basement and work upwards. Kennell says he sent Ivens to fetch back the members of the party who had strayed upstairs, and then they all went to the basement, where they found no one except Mr. and Mrs. Mudge, with whom Mrs. Moggridge had a bit of a dust up. Then they all went straight to the laboratory, and found Dr. Sambourne in the bedroom there, as you know."

"Then I take it," said Welsh, "there was no opportunity for any of them to be up to any monkey tricks at that particular time?"

"I think not, sir. Kennell says the ones who were fetched back from upstairs were Potts and Oman, but they seem to have been together, and not to have been away from the rest of the party for more than a minute or two. Even if it was a bit longer, I don't see how it could possibly have been long enough for administering the cyanide. Even if whoever it was had a hypodermic syringe all ready, he'd have had to dissolve the cyanide crystals in order to inject it, and that would have meant getting water or something, and there simply wasn't time—or at any rate I don't see how there could have been. I am not saying that there is any absolute assurance on that point—because Colonel Kennell is not, if I may say so, an absolutely reliable witness, and he may be wrong about the time Potts and Oman were away from the others. But pretty clearly the thing would have been quite impossible unless Potts and Oman were acting in collusion."

"And you don't think they were?"

"No, sir. But then, I don't know what to think. Come to the time after Dr. Sambourne was found. Mr. Potts seems fairly definitely to have been in the sickroom pretty continuously from the time he was found until long after Moggridge was dead. So were Dr. Glück and Franck and Mrs. Meyerbeer, from the time when they appeared on the scene; but that wasn't until a bit later. The rest were in and out of the sickroom until Dr. Yorick turned most of them out. Mrs. Moggridge went to fetch coffee, Ivens went for Mrs. Meyerbeer and the syringe, Miss Philip went to phone for Yorick, and so on."

"What about Oman?" Welsh asked. "Where was he?"

"He fetched bottles and things for Dr. Glück, and after that I think he was about in the lab. or the bedroom most of the time. But I can't be sure he was there continuously. Nobody seems to know about that."

"What does it all come to?"

"That the only one of them all who doesn't seem to have had any opportunity of getting upstairs to poison Moggridge is Mr. Potts. The others all could have, including the foreigners, who were left in the library but soon spread all over the place. So, for the matter of that, could be Winters, or Miss Moggridge, or the boy, who were upstairs all the time. Not Aronson, if he was still out. But, as I told you, I'm not certain about that. He could have slipped back between his calls on Miss Buck—if they were ever made."

The chief constable repeated his question. "What does it all amount to, Newte?"

"Well, sir, I haven't had a great deal of time yet."

"Frankly, Newte, have you any idea of what to do next?"

"There's a lot to be done, sir."

"Of course there is. I don't mean that. I mean, have you any real plan of campaign?"

"That's not too easy to answer, sir."

"Meaning you haven't? I'm not blaming you, Newte. But it strikes me this case is likely to be too much for us, if we try tackling it alone. I'm going to call in Scotland Yard."

"As you think best, sir."

"I told you that is Superintendent Piquon's view. Don't you agree?"

"Well, sir, I should naturally have liked more time. But I admit I can't see my way. And I'm not used to dealing with all these foreigners."

"Precisely, Newte. We need someone who is. I shall ring up Superintendent Wilson."

"He would hardly come himself, sir, would he?"

"Probably not. But I shall ask him to send his best man—someone who does know this type of foreigner."

"Not the Special Branch, sir?"

"No. Not on your life. They might send someone like General Bunker. Do you remember Superintendent Wilson telling us about General Bunker, Newte?"

"No, sir. I don't think I was present. Do I carry on, sir, meanwhile?"

For General Bunker, see *The Death of a Millionaire*.

"Of course; and have things as nice and tidy as you can for the Yard."

"Yes, sir," Inspector Newte gave a deep sigh, half sorrow and half relief. He had faintly hoped to distinguish himself by solving a remarkably intricate case; but his prospects of doing so had been made the smaller by a much stronger fear that he would fail to get to the bottom of the mystery. Would the Yard do any better? Newte sighed again. He realised he had hoped that the Yard man would be as baffled as he felt himself.

And then Inspector Newte fell slowly asleep in his chair. He had been up all night and very hard at work most of the day. He was tapped out.

2

ENTER SUPERINTENDENT WILSON

THE MURDER of Rowland Moncrieff and the attempted murder of Dr. Percy Sandbourne had occurred, the reader will remember, on a Saturday night, and the investigations described in the preceding chapters had occupied the greater part of Sunday. The chief constable drove home from his interview with Inspector Newte late on Sunday afternoon, with every intention of deferring his application to Scotland Yard until the following morning, when he might hope to find Superintendent Wilson in his office.

He ran his car into the garage and locked it up, and then entered his house by a door leading directly from the garage to the back of the hall. As he crossed the hall to hang up his coat and hat he heard the sound of laughter from the drawing-room. He felt suddenly very tired. "Oh, Lord!" he muttered. "People here! What a bore!"

Mrs. Welsh came out into the hall, going towards the stairs. She saw her husband. "Hubert," she cried. "I give you three guesses who is here."

Welsh could tell from her manner that she was in high good humour. Evidently her visitors were favourites. But he did not feel like guessing. He said wearily, "Give it up. Somebody you like."

"Right!" said Emily Welsh. "You go in and see who it is. I'll be back in a couple of minutes." She went upstairs, and he opened the dining-room door.

"Good heavens!" said the chief constable. "Talk of the devil!"

"My dear Hubert, is that a way to greet an old friend?" said the tall, well-proportioned, middle-aged man who had provoked the chief constable's outburst. He introduced a still taller, strikingly handsome, but distinctly stouter man who had also risen to his feet at Welsh's entrance. "This, Hubert, is my friend Dr. Michael Prendergast. I don't think you have met him; but you must have heard me speak of him. Michael, this is Colonel Welsh."

"Often," said the colonel. "I mean, Harry Wilson has told me lots about you. But what good wind brings you here, Harry?"

"Sheer misfortune, I am afraid. But a very pleasant misfortune, in this particular respect. Michael was driving me up to London, and his car broke down on the road, not a couple of miles from here, and we left it in a garage to be put right, and walked over. Actually, I phoned Emily from the garage, and she said we shouldn't be in the way."

"My dear fellah! Of course not. You'll both stay the night."

"Emily seems to want us to. But it's a bit thick, inflicting ourselves on you in these days of rationing."

"Rubbish! Lots of stuff in tins," Welsh answered. "Trust Emily. And I've got a few bottles of quite drinkable wine left even yet."

"That is indeed alluring, in these days. I must get back to-morrow morning, of course. The car won't be ready till then. We were meaning to try the Falcon."

"You'll stop here. And no London for you to-morrow, my boy—not if I can help it."

"I'm not on holiday," said Superintendent Wilson. "I am just off one case, and I fully expect there will be another waiting for me when I get back."

"Got one for you here," Welsh retorted. "A corker. Just your sort. I was going to ring you up at the Yard the first thing in the morning."

"It would need to be what you call a corker, to keep me here," said Wilson. "I seldom get out of London in these times. I'm beginning to think my sleuthing days are over. All administrative work nowadays. I'm tied to my desk nearly all the time."

"But you said you had just been on a case."

"Oh, that's the exception. A flying visit to Marlborough,

about a parson near there who is said to have been
suzzling the church funds."

Seems like old times—chasing predatory clergymen,"
said the chief constable, thinking of the great case of the
Leconfield Barrington and the Rev. Stephen Smith,
Shaw.¹

Quite. Only this one wasn't nearly so versatile a person
as our old friends the jewel-stealers," Wilson answered. "I
told you about the Shaw case at the time, Michael."

I remember," said Dr. Prendergast, in his pleasant,
red voice. "But who is the alluring criminal Colonel
Smith is asking you to go in chase of now?"

If I knew that," said Welsh, "I probably shouldn't need
your assistance. I rather fancy a fellah called David Oman
f. But it's an open field."

Who's been doing what?" Wilson asked. "Not that
it is any prospect, mind you. . . ."

Murder!" said the chief constable. "Poison's the
word; and the queerest feature about the case is that the
man was poisoned twice over—once with laudanum and once
with cyanide."

That does sound interesting. Which killed him? The
cyanide, I presume."

Yes. But why do you presume so?"

Merely because cyanide poisoning is always speedy,
as laudanum poisoning usually takes time. If the man
had taken the cyanide first, there wouldn't have been much
chance for him to take the laudanum afterwards. Eh, Michael?"

Prendergast nodded assent.
There. You're getting interested already," said the chief
constable.

Emily Welsh came hurrying back into the room. "Well,
aren't you surprised?" she said. "You know I told
you this morning to send for Harry; and here he is. It's a
case of Providence."

Did you tell him so?" asked her husband.

"I didn't say a word," cried Emily Welsh. "I only made
out keeping him here for the night; and, of course, we shall
be glad to have him for as long as he needs to clear up the
thing."

Superintendent Wilson repeated his determination to
go to London on the following day. It was, he admitted,
a special case that called him back; but he had a mass of

¹ See *The Corpse in the Chief Constable's Garden*.

administrative duties to deal with, even if there were no particular problem needing his personal attention.

"Rubbish!" said Emily Welsh. "That man of yours can see to all that. What's his name? Blake, or something?"

"If you mean Chief Inspector Blaikie," said Wilson, "I'm afraid he's not available. He was busy spy-hunting in Wales when I last heard of him. I've nobody but a younger man called Fairford to help me with the administrative work now. We're short handed, you know, both in the office and for the field work."

"Then you won't be able to spare any one to send us," said Mrs. Welsh, "and therefore you'll have to stop yourself."

"Feminine logic!" said Wilson, laughing. "But tell me more about your murder, Hubert. I should like to hear. So would Michael, especially as it's a poisoning case. He revels in them."

"I do not," said Prendergast. "I have a peculiar dislike of poisoners. In my experience, they are usually most unpleasant people."

"Aren't all murderers?" asked Welsh.

"Far from it," said Superintendent Wilson. "I have met several really charming murderers. Some of them it has seemed a real pity to hang."

"Shaw had his charm," said Colonel Welsh. "You used to think so, Emily."

Mrs. Welsh changed the subject. "I doubt if you will find any charming murderers in this case, Harry. All these people at Excalibur House seem to be most unpleasant."

"Is Excalibur House the scene of the crime?" Wilson asked. "What a romantic name! The least I shall expect you to tell me after that is that Merlin is suspected of poisoning the Round Table."

"I might be able to offer you a passable Guenevere," said the chief constable. "But I'm afraid there is not much of the King Arthur touch about it in most respects. It really is quite the most extraordinary place you ever heard of. Dr. Sambourne fills it up with the most impossible sort of people. Refugees!"

"Not Sambourne the currency crank, by any chance?" Wilson inquired.

"I thought he was a scientist," said Emily Welsh.

"That's the fellah," said the chief constable. "Fellah with any number of bees in his bonnet."

"Has he been murdered?"

"No, but jolly nearly. The doctor says he'll recover. He got his dose of morphine, as well as the other fellow."

"But no cyanide, I gather."

"No. How did . . . Oh, I see. You mean, or he'd be dead too. But the doctors say the morphine would have killed Moggridge in any case, without the cyanide."

"What Moggridge is that?" said Wilson sharply.

"I don't know much about him, except that he was Ambourne's brother in law."

"I used to know a Moggridge in the Home Office," Wilson explained. "He retired some years ago. What was this man's Christian name?"

"Blest if I know," said Welsh. "Newte'd know, of course. I did know, I've forgotten."

"Never mind!" said Wilson. "You go right ahead with your story. We're listening."

So Colonel Welsh began to tell the story of the night's events at Escalibur House. He was not a good narrator; for he was always getting things in the wrong order, and having to go back on his narrative in order to pick up points which he had missed. Moreover, the story itself was in this case confusing, because of the large number of persons involved. Wilson had to keep saying "Who's—so and so"; and then Welsh would interrupt his narrative with a brief character sketch. Some of these were sufficiently pungent—for example: "Mrs. Moggridge—hell of a female. Behaves as if she owned the earth, and every one was trying to steal it off her."

Or,

"Oman—dirty little boulder with the deuce of an opinion of himself and not a good word for anybody else. Cold-blooded little devil, if you ask me."

Or,

Rossini—performing monkey with all the tricks. Said to be an engineer. More likely a gold digger."

Or, finally,

Dr. Eva Glück—fat, forty, and Freudian. I could give her the other two."

"I must say, Hubert," said Superintendent Wilson, "your talent for portraiture is improving. Do there happen to be any pleasant characters in this drama of yours, or are they all of the kind of people one would enjoy hanging?"

"Oh, some of them seem pretty decent. There's a girl named Mary Philip—Sambourne's secretary."